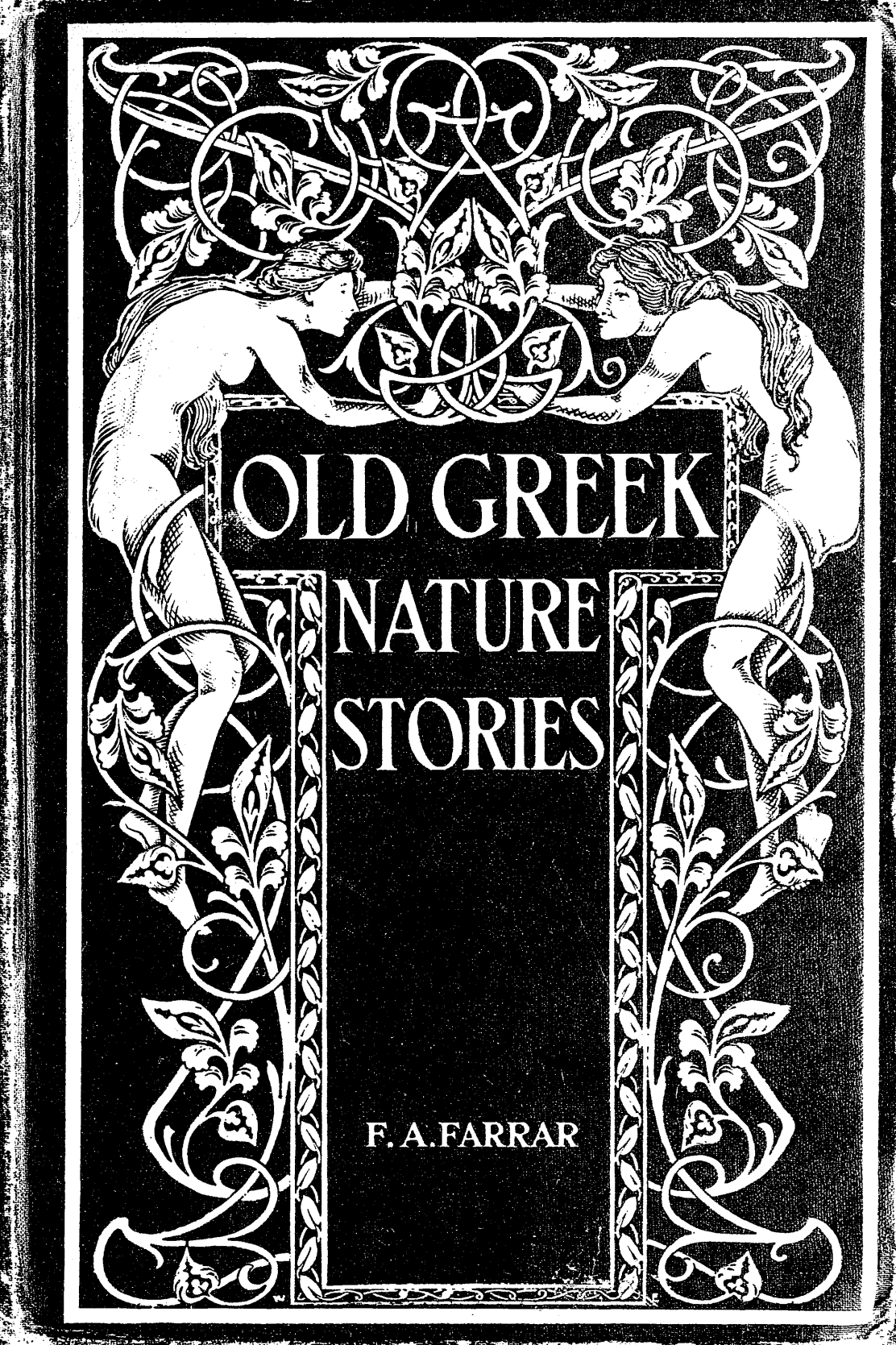
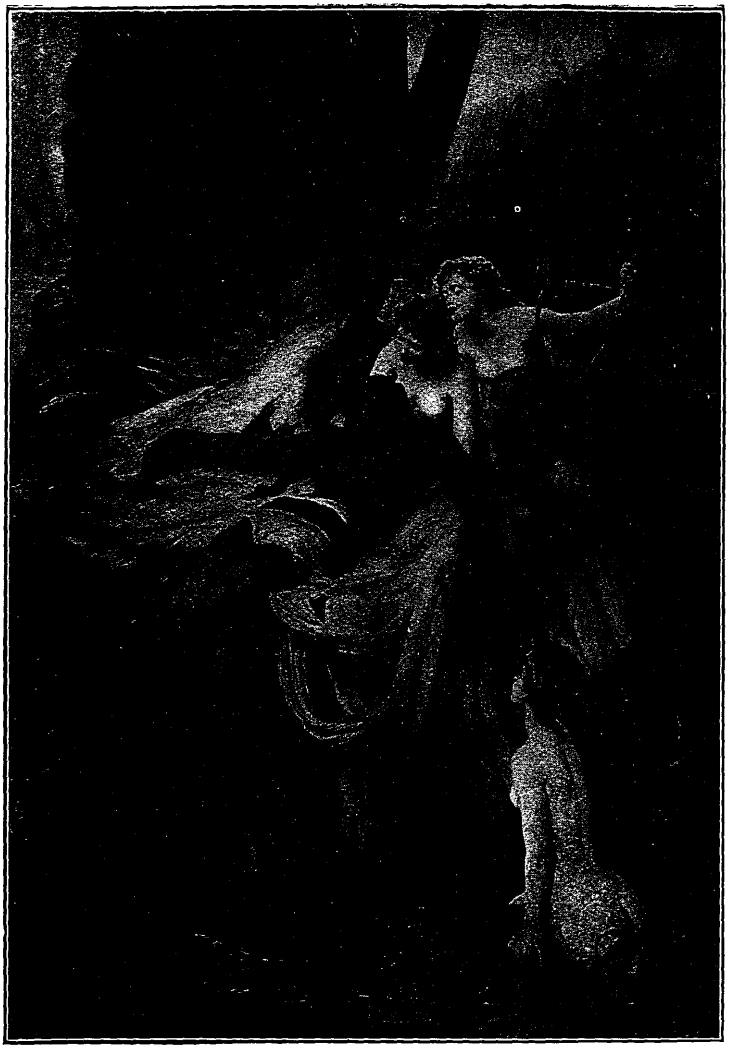

OLD GREEK
NATURE
STORIES
F. A. FARRAR

Old Greek Nature Stories



The Lament for Icarus

Fr. Herbert Draper

National Gallery of British Art

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OLD GREEK NATURE STORIES

BY

F. A. FARRAR B.A. B.Sc.

With Thirty-two Exquisite Plates after the Masterpieces of Painting and Sculpture in the Principal Galleries

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CHAPTER I: HOW THE OLD GREEKS LOOKED AT NATURE

Greek Influence in Literature and Art—No Science : a World where all Things were possible—Origin of Nature Myths—Greeks and Romans

CHAPTER I

How the Old Greeks looked at Nature

MORE than three thousand years ago there lived in the land which we now call Greece a simple, but brave and intelligent people, who called themselves Hellenes, but who are better known to us as Greeks, the name given to them by the Romans. As time went on they made such wonderful progress that they reached the height of their glory five hundred years before the people of our own island had got beyond the stage of painted and skin-clad savages. While the latter were still living in caves or in rude huts, Athens, the most famous city of the Greeks, was adorned with beautiful statues and temples which are still the admiration of the world.

Charles Kingsley, in his preface to "The Heroes," a book which every boy and girl should read, says: "You can hardly find a well-written book which has not in it Greek names, and words, and proverbs; you cannot pass through a great town without passing Greek buildings; you cannot go into a well-

furnished room without seeing Greek statues and ornaments, even Greek patterns of furniture and paper, so strangely have these old Greeks left their mark behind them upon this modern world in which we now live." He goes on to remind us that to them we owe the beginnings of our knowledge of mathematics, of our philosophy, of our geography and astronomy, of our laws, and freedom, and politics.

Now, one of the most interesting things that these old Greeks have left to us is the wonderful collection of stories which grew up and were handed down among them from generation to generation, from a time long before the art of writing was invented, until at last they were written down, and so saved from being forgotten. Most of these were in the form of poetry, and in that form they have come down to us. Since, as we have seen, the modern world owes so much to this famous nation, it is fitting that we should know something of what they thought, and in what way they regarded the world around them; and one of the best ways of getting this knowledge is through the wonderful stories in which they delighted.

Many of them are so beautiful that they have a great charm, not only for boys and girls, but for older people as well, for they show that the old Greeks had not only a very poetic imagination, but

THE CHILD-HOOD OF ZEUS

FROM THE PAINTING BY G. F. WATTS

BY PER-MIS-SION OF MR. FRED-ERICK HOLLYER

also many true and noble ideas. They loved courage and truthfulness, dutiful conduct to parents, courtesy to strangers, and kindness to those in need.

Since references to the old Greek and Roman stories (for the Romans, too, had their own, though most of what they had were borrowed from the Greeks) are so constantly met with in reading, and especially in reading poetry, it is clear that without some knowledge of them, we must miss a great deal of the profit and enjoyment of literature. The same thing also applies to art, for artists have always been attracted by these old stories, and if we have read them it adds wonderfully to our enjoyment of many a beautiful picture or group of statuary.

We must not forget that the outlook of the old Greeks was very different from our own. Science has made such great progress, has found out so much about the laws of nature—that is, the ways in which the forces of nature act—and education is so general, that we are all more or less familiar with them, and there is not much room left for the imagination. If anyone were to tell us nowadays, seriously, that he had seen in the forest a dreadful serpent, which had sent out flames and clouds of smoke from its mouth and nostrils when he approached it, or that a certain tree was really a maiden who had suddenly taken root, and been changed into that form, we

should wonder that he could expect us to believe anything so absurd.

But these Greeks lived, like untaught children, and like all nations in their infancy, in a world where all sorts of wonderful things were possible. Knowing little or nothing of the laws of nature, they were apt to suppose that things around them had intelligence somewhat like their own, and saw no reason why the most marvellous tales should not be true.

The restless waves of the sea, dashing against the shore, and ever trying to tear it away, became Hekaton-cheires, or Hundred-handed monsters, the offspring of Uranus (Heaven) and Gæa (Earth); while the awe-inspiring volcanoes and earthquakes gave rise to their brothers, the Titans, who warred even against the gods. The flashing lightning and the destroying thunderbolt were not only the dreaded weapons of Zeus, the king of the gods, but were personified as Cyclops, each with one flashing eye. The " warring of the elements " was no mere figure of speech to them, but the expression of the wrath of the gods, and sometimes even the very conflict of supernatural powers.

The gentler aspects of nature, too, were equally instinct with life. The flash of a foam-crested, sunlit wave in the distance easily became a glimpse of a beautiful sea-nymph sporting in her native element;

a sudden gleam of sunshine amid the gloom of the forest, disappearing almost before the hunter or the woodcutter could turn his eyes towards the spot, was changed by his startled fancy into a nymph or a satyr; while the moonlight played strange tricks with the eyesight of the belated wanderer in the forest, and sent him home with a wondrous tale of how he had caught sight of a fleeting nymph of Diana's huntress train.

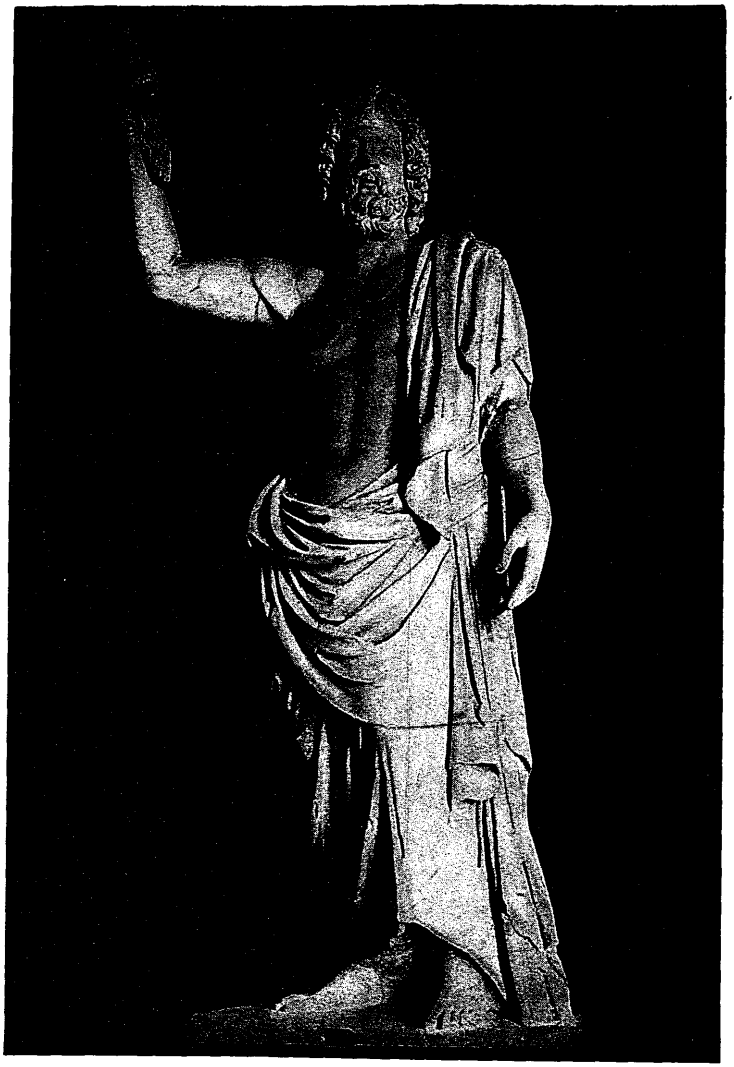
The mysterious sounds of nature, too, helped to swell the list of strange beings created by their lively imagination, as anyone can easily understand who has listened to the voices of the night or of the storm. Yet we must not think of these simple men of old as timid or cowardly. On the contrary, they were active, enterprising, and daring in the face of real danger, and even when surrounded by fancied terrors, like Hereward the Wake, who struck manfully and killed the Fairy Bear, though he half expected his sword to turn to water in his hand, they bore themselves like the brave, high-minded men they were.

We must not be surprised, seeing how full of mystery nature was for them, that many of their myths, as these imaginary stories are called, have their origin in the wonders of nature. The sun and the moon, the storm and the rainbow, the cruel rocks

and whirlpools which threatened their frail vessels on the sea, even the strange intervals of perfectly calm weather which occurred from time to time, all gave rise to myths. Not only the sea and sky, but the rivers and streams, the mountains and the woods, even the trees, had their special divinities.

Many peculiarities of birds, beasts, and insects seemed to them to have something very human about them, and they accounted for them by stories in which human beings were changed into these forms by some god or goddess, while by even stranger *metamorphoses*, as they called these changes of form, some unfortunate people became trees, flowers, rocks, and streams. It is these Nature Stories with which, in the present volume, we propose to deal.

But to understand the stories it is our object to relate, it is necessary to have a general acquaintance with the ideas of the old Greeks as to the gods by whom they conceived the world to be governed. Many of these ideas were borrowed by the Romans, as we have already said, for the Romans, as a younger nation and near neighbours of the Greeks, were very much influenced by the more imaginative and civilised nation. And as the Romans had far more to do with Western Europe than the Greeks had,



Jupiter
Capitol, Rome

we are more familiar with these old heathen deities by the names given to them by the Latin race.

In the next chapter therefore, in which some account of the chief gods and goddesses will be given, the Latin names will be added along with the Greek.

CHAPTER II: THE CHIEF GODS AND GODDESSES OF OLYMPUS

Jupiter—Juno — Minerva—Mars—Vulcan —Apollo — Diana—Venus—Cupid—Mercury: Exploits of Mercury on his Birthday—Vesta—Olympus

CHAPTER II

The Chief Gods and Goddesses of Olympus

THE gods and goddesses of the Greeks, though they ruled the world and were so far above mortals, were very like magnified human beings, and though, on the whole, they governed justly, punishing the evil-doer and rewarding the virtuous, yet we find them in the old legends animated by passions similar to those of men, joining in the same pursuits, and even tainted by some of the same vices.

The supreme ruler of the universe was Zeus (the Roman Jupiter, or Jove), the wisest and most powerful of the gods, throned on Olympus, his throne being surrounded by the seats of the other deities. He was the dispenser of justice, whose decrees, though he at times consulted with the other gods, were final, yet bound by those of the mysterious Fates. He rode forth on a thunder-chariot, launching against his enemies the unerring thunderbolt, or the

flashing lightning. He bore an *ægis*, a breastplate or shield of terrible splendour, though, like all the gods and goddesses, he sometimes appeared on earth disguised as an ordinary mortal, or even assumed the form of an animal.

His sister and wife was Hera (Juno), the Queen of Heaven, majestic in power, wisdom, and beauty, but rather severe, and inclined to be jealous of her husband and lord. To the brave and virtuous, however, she often showed her favour.

Next came Athene, or Pallas (Minerva), the goddess of the lightning and the storms, the warlike maid, who sprang fully armed from the head of Zeus. She was the goddess of wisdom and the patron of skill, of domestic arts, such as spinning and weaving, and of the tilling of the soil. Like Zeus, she also bore an ægis, but to hers was fixed the head of the Gorgon Medusa, slain by Perseus, so terrifying with its snake-entwined locks that all who looked upon it were turned to stone.

The children of Zeus and Hera were Ares (Mars), Hephæstus (Vulcan), and the goddess Hebe, the last of whom, the beautiful personification of eternal youth, is one of the lesser gods. She was the cup-bearer of the gods, until on one occasion she stumbled when carrying the nectar which was the wine of the gods, and falling into disgrace, her place was taken

The Forge of Vulcan
Velasquez
Anderson Photo.

by Ganymede, a beautiful youth who was carried off from Troy by Zeus in the form of an eagle.

Ares was the god of War, fierce and revengeful, delighting in bloodshed, and often taking part in the wars of men. He was sometimes attended in battle by his sons, Terror, Trembling, Panic, and Fear, and by his sister Eris (Discord). Though he was the god of War, Athene was his superior, the meaning of this evidently being that Wisdom is more powerful than Violence.

Hephæstus was the god of Fire, especially connected with the internal fires of the earth, of which volcanoes, named after him, are the outlet; also with the fires of the forge and of the home. He was a wonderful artificer in metals, and in his workshop under Mount Etna, which acted as the chimney of his forge, he made, with the help of the cyclops, his workmen, the armour and weapons of the gods, and forged the thunderbolts of Zeus. The things he made had supernatural powers; thus, when the sea-goddess Thetis went to him to obtain a suit of armour for her famous son Achilles, she found him making tripods which would come at his call, and retire when no longer needed.

Phœbus, or Apollo, and Artemis (Diana) were the son and daughter of Zeus and Leto (Latona), who is the personification of Night. As Apollo is the Sun-

god and Artemis the Moon-goddess, this fable represents the natural light, both of day and of night, springing from darkness.

Helios was an older sun-god than Apollo, but as time went on the two were gradually confused together, and the stories that had been told of Helios were transferred to the newer deity. It may be mentioned that the same thing happened with respect to others of the immortals. And as the Greeks established many colonies, it often happened that their gods and goddesses were very similar in their character, and they also became confused. The deeds of the local deity were ascribed to the Greek one, and in this way the stories told of particular gods became more numerous, and in some cases contradictory.

Of all the natural objects that would attract the attention of such a race as we have described, the sun is by far the most striking and majestic. It is therefore not surprising that Apollo played a more important part in the life and myths of the Greeks than any other deity, perhaps not even excepting Zeus. The sun drove away the darkness and brought the cheerful day, with all its activities and joys, hence Apollo was the god of Music and Poetry. His instrument was the lyre, on which he was without a rival, and to some of his favourites he gave the gift

of song. He was the god, not only of the sun, and of natural light, but also of the light of the soul, hence he was the god of Prophecy, of the Arts and the Sciences.

Even ancient nations realised how closely the light and warmth of the sun, like fresh air, are connected with the health and well-being of mankind. Accordingly, we find that the Sun-god is also the god of Healing, and it was very natural that, from their point of view, they should imagine that to him the human race owed its knowledge of the healing art. This he transmitted to them through one of his sons Æsculapius (*Gr.* Asklepios).

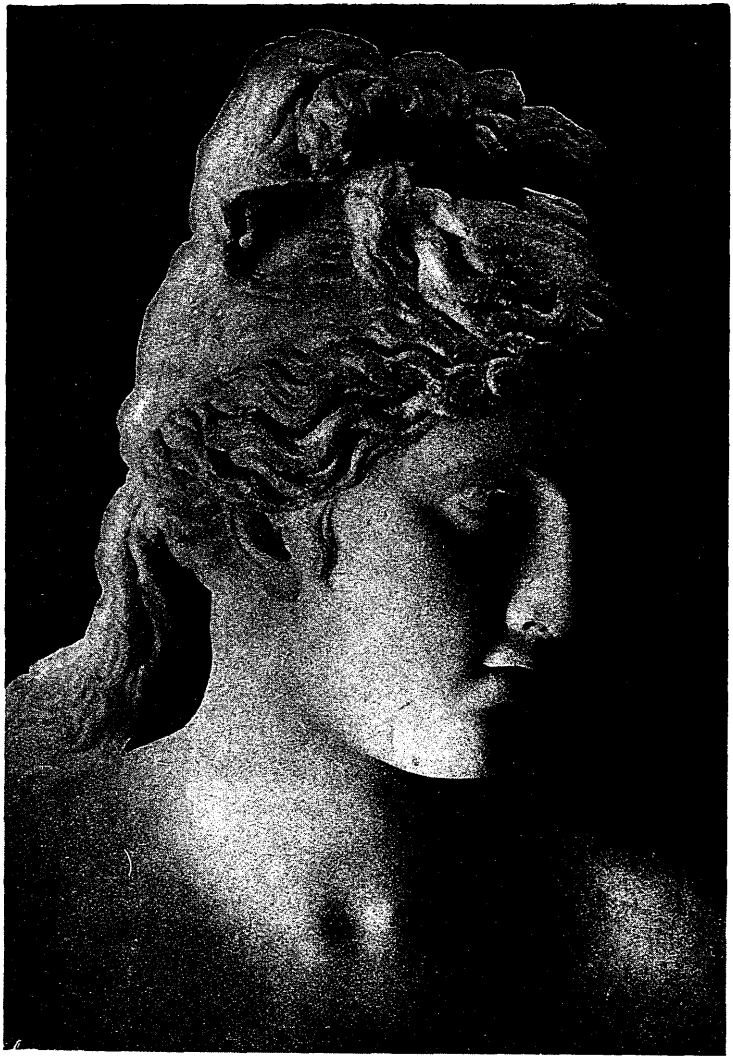
Apollo is always represented as a beautiful youth, the very embodiment of grace and vigour. His weapons are arrows, which he launches with unerring aim against those who have offended him. In these we see the rays of the sun in his blazing splendour.

Artemis, or Diana, the twin sister of Apollo, was the maiden goddess, the ideal of grace, modesty, and maidenly vigour. She was the goddess of the silver bow, a devoted huntress, yet the protectress of wild animals. She was followed by a train of nymphs vowed to perpetual maidenhood, who shared with her the toils and joys of the chase. She is identified with the Moon, and the cold, pure light of the orb of night typifies her nature. We can easily under-

stand how the silvery moonbeams, darting through the leaves of the forest, became the arrows of her ivory quiver, and the slender new moon her silver bow. Like her brother, she was an unerring archer, and took part in many of his adventures. The bear, the wild-boar, the dog, and the goat were all her favourites, but especially the hind, which is often represented standing beside her in pictures and sculpture. She was gracious and gentle, but could resent very severely any injury to her favourites, or insult to herself.

Venus, to use the Latin name, the goddess of love and beauty, of gardens and flowers, at the touch of whose feet the earth burst into bloom, was the daughter of Zeus and Dione; or, according to another myth, rose from the sea-foam, and was therefore called Aphrodite, the "foam-born." In the watery world, the dolphin and the swan were her favourites; in the air, the dove and the sparrow were sacred to her. Her influence was gentle and helpful in some cases, but in many others she was the cause of strife and sorrow. She was attended by her son, the ever youthful Cupid, who is identified with the Greek Eros, the winged god of love, bearing a bow and a quiver of golden arrows, with which, with unerring aim, he inspired the breasts of mortals with love.

Hermes (Mercury), the son of Zeus and Maia,



Venus
Capitol, Rome

was the messenger of Zeus and the other gods. He is represented with winged ankles (the wings are in most accounts attached to golden sandals) and a winged hat. He bore a golden (or wood) *caduceus*, or rod, topped with wings and entwined with snakes, and was swift as the wind. He was famous for his beauty, grace and endurance, the sweetness of his voice, his skill in music, and his eloquence, as became the herald of the gods. One of his duties was to conduct to Hades the souls of the dead. He was also the patron of inventors, of travellers, and of merchants, the bringer of good luck in all kinds of enterprises.

It seems likely, from many of his attributes, that he was originally a personification of the Wind. Even the wind's habit of snatching and carrying off things is found in Mercury, for thieves claimed him as their patron god, and an amusing story about him seems to justify them. During the same day in which he was born he went out, stole the oxen of Apollo which were grazing in the mountains, and with great cunning concealed their tracks as he drove them into a cave. Then, so as to set a good example, he made a fire, and offered two of them as a sacrifice to the gods, including himself. Then he went back to his swaddling-clothes, and while he was sweetly sleeping, Apollo, having found him out, came in and

charged him with the theft. As the infant god persisted in denying it, Apollo took him before Jupiter and made his complaint. The culprit repeated his denial, and said that Apollo was a coward to bully a helpless babe, who did not even know what cattle were. But the rascal winked so knowingly that all present were convulsed with laughter. The quarrel was adjusted, Apollo made Mercury the herdsman of his oxen, and gave him the caduceus, and the infant not only swore not to steal from his half-brother again, but made him a present of the lyre, which he had invented and made from the shell of a tortoise, as one of the incidents of his eventful birthday. Later in his career he stole at various times the girdle of Venus, the trident of Neptune, the sword of Mars, and the tongs of Vulcan.

Vesta, the elder sister of Zeus, was the goddess of the hearth, and therefore the guardian of the home. In her temple at Rome the fire on her altar was kept continually burning, guarded by her six priestesses, the "vestal virgins."

The home of the gods, the Heaven of the Greeks, was on Olympus, of which Mount Olympus in Greece was a symbol. Here they had their palaces, of which that of Zeus was the chief. In his great hall they feasted, their food being ambrosia and their drink nectar, which gave them the strength and beauty of

eternal youth. In this hall, too, were held the councils of the gods, and here the songs of the Muses, the music of Apollo's lyre, and the jokes of Vulcan gave pleasure to the assembled deities. At times the gods of the Underworld and of the Ocean, as well as those who usually lived on the Earth, were also summoned to take their places in the councils of the Father of Gods and Men.

CHAPTER III: STORIES OF THE SUN-GOD

The Hyperboreans — Slaughter of the Python — Contest with Marsyas—Story of Niobe—Chariot of the Sun—Aurora and the Hours—Daily Course of the Sun—Story of Phæton — Why Ethiopians are black — The Poplars — Cycnus and the Swan — Æsculapius and the Centaur Chiron — Sons of Æsculapius—Hygeia

CHAPTER III

Stories of the Sun-God

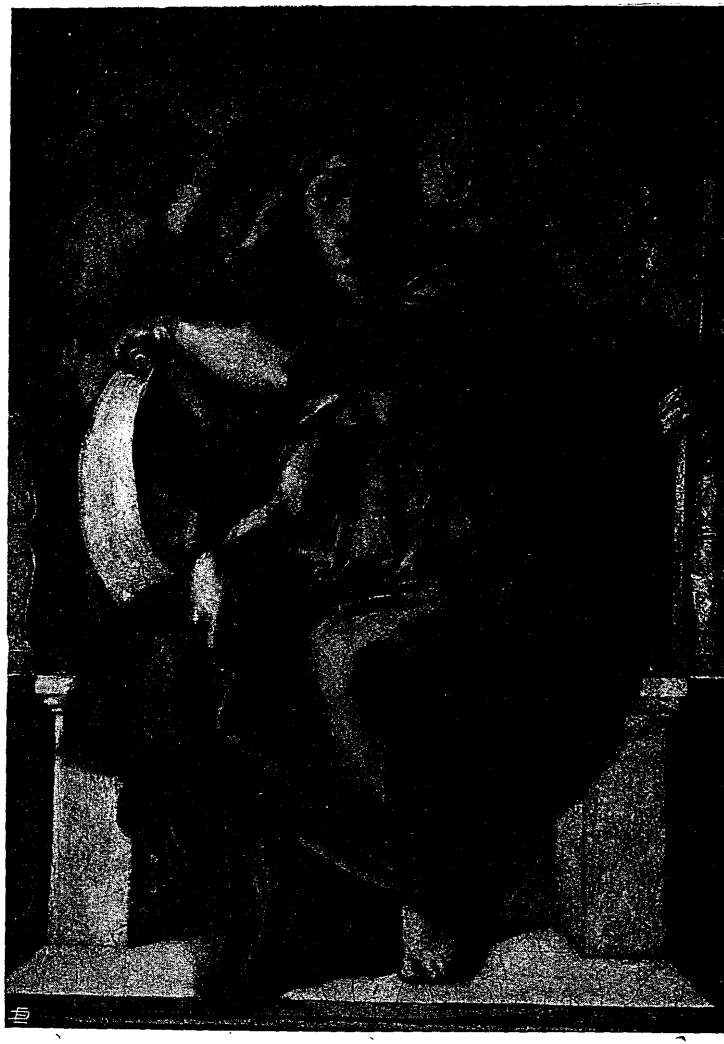
APOLLO spent a period on earth, bringing many benefits to mankind. His chief abode in Greece was Delphi, which was ever after the principal seat of his worship, and where he had an oracle, or priest to whom he revealed his will and by whom he sometimes foretold coming events. But before settling at Delphi he spent a year among the Hyperboreans. Boreas was the god of the north wind, and this fabulous race lived beyond the bleak mountains from whose caverns the north wind issued. They lived a peaceful and happy life, feeding upon the fruits which Apollo caused the earth to bring forth abundantly. For half the year their climate was perpetual daylight and balmy spring; they were free from toil and warfare, from disease and old age. Evidently the Greeks had some vague idea of the "Land of the Midnight Sun."

When the god came to Greece he had a conflict with the Python, an enormous serpent which had

come from the mud left by the great flood of Deucalion and Pyrrha, apparently a tradition of the Deluge. This monster he slew with his golden arrows, a story which arises, according to some, from the destruction of the darkness of night by the sun, or according to others from the victory of the sun over the darkness and cold of winter. So Apollo is the god of the year, with its months and its seasons, bringing in spring and summer, and the fruits of harvest. Winter was not counted as one of the seasons, but rather as a period when nature lay in the grip of death, waiting for the sun to manifest again its power.

Apollo was a pure and just ruler, promoting life and peace, but he could inflict terrible vengeance when offended, as the following story shows. The goddess Athene at one time played on the flute, but happening one day to catch sight of her reflection in the water as she was playing, she noticed how it distorted her face. She therefore threw away the instrument in disgust, and it was picked up by a satyr, or, as some say, a peasant, named Marsyas.

Now, the goddess having breathed into it, it gave forth, when he began to play, the most beautiful strains. Thinking that the credit was due to himself, he became full of conceit, and challenged Apollo to a trial of skill, the Muses being asked to act as



The Delphic Sibyl 34
Michael Angelo

judges. Apollo was deeply angry at his presumption, but accepted the challenge. Marsyas played beautiful music on the flute, but Apollo brought forth such divine strains from his lyre, that the Muses at once decided in his favour, and the god, to punish Marsyas for his impiety, bound him to a tree and flayed him alive.

In another story, in which also presumption is punished, Apollo and his sister Diana join in executing vengeance. Niobe, the wife of Amphion, king of Thebes, was a proud and boastful woman, and dared to claim that she was superior to Latona, who had only one son and one daughter, for she herself was blessed with seven sons and an equal number of beautiful daughters. When the women of the city were offering their worship at the altar of Latona one day, she rebuked them, claiming their reverence for herself. Thereupon the goddess summoned her son and daughter, Apollo and Diana, and besought them to avenge the insult. Burning with indignation, they swiftly descended to the walls of the city. On the plain were the seven sons of Niobe, engaged in chariot-racing, wrestling, and other sports. One after another they were struck down by the unerring arrows, and their lifeless bodies were borne to the palace.

While the queen and her daughters were mourning

over their dead, the fatal arrows again began to fly, until the unhappy mother had but her youngest daughter left, and even while Niobe was appealing to the gods, too late, to spare but this one, the maiden was slain. So great was her woe that she was turned to stone, and being carried by a hurricane to her native land, was placed on a mountain, where she continues to distil tears.

The stories in which Apollo is represented as slaying men and women with his arrows probably refer to sudden deaths by plague, which the ancients believed to be due to the excessive heat of the sun—possibly some of them owe their origin to death by sunstroke.

Apollo, originally Helios, is represented as driving the chariot of the sun in its arched path across the heavens. This car was of dazzling beauty, made by the god of Fire, of pure gold, adorned with precious stones, the whole reflecting the radiant splendour of the sun. It was drawn by four immortal steeds, from whose nostrils issued flames, and which no weaker hand than that of Apollo himself could manage. The goddess Aurora (representing an older Eos), the personification of the Dawn, opened the gates of the palace of Helios each day, so that the glorious equipage could be driven forth, and herself preceded the god of day to the starting point of his journey.

It was the duty of the Hours, who were inferior deities, to yoke the glorious steeds to the chariot.

Mounting the car, Phœbus then drove the fiery horses up the steep ascent, guiding them all day long in their appointed path until in the evening they descended in the west into the wide stream of Oceanus. The Greeks thought that the earth was a vast, flat circle, divided in the middle by the sea (the Mediterranean), and with the broad river of Ocean flowing round it. Homer and Hesiod, from whom we get the oldest of these stories, do not explain how the sun got back to its starting point, ready for the next day's journey, but later poets imagined a wonderful winged boat, made, like the chariot, by Hephæstus, which received the sun, with its golden car, and bore them swiftly round the ocean to the east again.

It is not unnatural that the ancients should imagine, when the sun's heat was exceptionally fierce, that the chariot had come nearer to the earth than usual. Probably the tradition of some very hot summer, when the earth was parched up with drought, and great forest fires took place, gave rise to the famous story of Phæton. We can imagine too, from the conclusion of the story, that the long drought was ended, as is often the case, by a terrific thunderstorm.

Phæton was the son of Apollo and Clymene, one of

the ocean nymphs. He was a beautiful but vain and presumptuous youth, and on one occasion he went to the palace of the god, and asked him to give him a proof that he really was his father. Apollo swore by the Styx, the great river of Hades, the underworld—an oath which could not be broken—to grant whatever the youth might desire, whereupon Phæton asked to be allowed to drive the chariot of the sun for a whole day. The father, greatly dismayed, and foreseeing the result, did his utmost to dissuade his son from pressing his request, but in vain. But he was bound to keep his oath, so he anointed him with a sacred ointment to protect him from the scorching rays, set his own crown of rays upon the youth's head, and led him to the car, which had just been brought out.

The god then gave him careful directions, telling him to keep a firm hold of the reins, but to spare the whip, and to keep within the middle zone, avoiding both the northern and the southern. He was also to keep the well-worn path, going neither too high nor too low.

Impatient to be off, the son shook the reins, and away dashed the immortal coursers up the steep ascent. But no sooner did they feel that the weight behind them was less than usual, and that the hand on the reins was not that of their master, than they

Aurora
Guido Reni

became unmanageable. They rushed wildly from the usual track, now so high as to threaten the heavens themselves with destruction, and now so low that it seemed as if the earth must share the same fate. The forests took fire, the streams and even the rivers were dried up, so that the gods of the earth, and Poseidon (Neptune), the Ocean-god, to whom the rivers belong, called on Zeus to intervene and save them from destruction. The Ethiopians were so scorched that they turned black, and their descendants remain so to this day.

Phæton, from whose terrified hands the reins had long since dropped, was dashed from the car by a thunderbolt hurled by Zeus, and his lifeless body fell into the river Eridanus (the Po), where the river-nymphs, in pity, buried it. His three sisters mourned for him so long and so bitterly that at last Zeus, to release them from their misery, turned them into polpar-trees by the river-side, and their tears into amber. This seems to account for the fact that the poplar flourishes best near streams. Spenser refers to the same fact when he speaks in the "Faerie Queene," of "the poplar, never dry."

His friend Cycnus (Greek *kuknos*, a swan) also bewailed his loss, bending over the river into which his lost companion had vanished, until Apollo turned him into a swan. So he swam about on the

river, gazing down into the water as if looking for his friend, and uttering at times a mournful cry. Here we have a reference to the attitude and voice of the swan, and this, with the fact that the name of the youth is the same as that of the bird, makes it probable that it was these peculiarities which first suggested the myth. In some cases the mere likeness of the name of some personage of former times to that of some animal or other object seems to have given rise to a story in which they are shown to be the same.

Mention has already been made of Æsculapius, one of the sons of Apollo. As a child he, like a number of other heroes and demi-gods (one of whose parents was a god or goddess), was placed in the care of a wise old Centaur named Chiron, one of a race of beings having the body of a horse, with the upper part of a man springing from where the horse's neck should be. Chiron himself, gifted by Apollo and Diana, was skilled in music, in prophecy, and in medicine, as well as in archery and hunting, and he brought up the boys in his charge to excel in all manly pursuits, including wrestling, boxing, running, and the use of weapons, as well as in music and poetical composition.

He encouraged, too, the special gifts of the boys. So the "wise child," Æsculapius, wandered about

collecting all kinds of herbs and learning their healing properties, and when he grew up he became the most wonderful of all physicians. So skilful did he become that he even restored the dead to life. Pluto, the king of the Underworld, angry at this invasion of his realm, complained to Zeus, who thereupon killed the wise old physician with a thunderbolt, though after his death he was received among the gods. As a god he was worshipped, and he is still referred to as the founder and patron of the healing art. His sons, who helped in the war against Troy, had some of their father's skill; so had his daughter Hygeia or Hygieia, who was worshipped as the goddess of health, and has given her name to the science of hygiene.

We shall find Apollo concerned in many of the stories in later chapters.

CHAPTER IV: THE CHIEF DEITIES OF EARTH

Greek Attitude towards Nature—Ceres—Proserpine and the Wanderings of Ceres—Explanation of Winter —The Nymph Cyane—Story of Triptolemus—Pan —The Stillness of the Heat of the Day—Bacchus—Midas: Origin of Alluvial Gold

CHAPTER IV

The Chief Deities of Earth

WE have seen that the Greeks regarded the operations, which we look upon as part of the ordinary course of nature, as the work of separate gods. Some of these were greater gods, who bore a general rule over the whole world; some were inferior deities, who were concerned with the working of particular operations; while others were confined to particular localities and had very limited powers. In the present chapter we shall learn something of the gods and other supernatural beings specially connected with the surface of the Earth. And however mistaken these old races were in the multiplication of gods, we cannot but admire the reverent spirit shown in many of the myths by which they tried to explain all the mysteries of nature around them.

The marvellous workings of Nature in the changes of the seasons, the way in which the earth seemed to burst into new life with each returning spring, the beautiful profusion of the flowers, the generous

provision year by year of fruits and grain, and all things necessary for man's comfort and well-being, awoke in them wonder and gratitude, and from their fertile and poetic imagination sprang many kindly deities to whom they ascribed all these marvels.

Of these, the chief was Demeter, known to the Romans, to whom her worship was brought by the Greek colonists who settled in Sicily, as Ceres. From her character as the Earth-mother (which is the meaning of Demeter), the goddess of agriculture and of plenty, the name of Ceres was given to wheat and other grains, and we still speak of these as cereals. It was Ceres who taught men to till the ground, and so introduced a settled, pastoral life instead of the wandering, unsettled life natural to men who knew nothing of how to till the soil. Bountiful harvests were a sign of her favour, while drought, famine, and blight visited the land which incurred her displeasure. She is often represented in art with her hands full of wheat-ears.

It seemed strange to the Greeks, that the earth, so full of beauty and fruitfulness, should for months in each year lie cold and lifeless, and they invented a very beautiful story to account for the change. This, the story of Persephone, or Proserpine, is one of the most famous of the old myths.

The Return of Persephone
Lord Leighton

Ceres became the wife of Jupiter (to use their Latin names), and their daughter Proserpine she loved most dearly, being unhappy if she was long out of her sight. One day, as the maiden was gathering flowers by the side of a beautiful lake in the Sicilian woods, in a spot where perpetual spring reigned, she caught sight of a wonderful narcissus which bore a hundred flowers, and filled the air with perfume. As she stooped to gather it, a chasm opened, and from it there suddenly appeared a splendid chariot, drawn by four black horses, and bearing Pluto, the god of the underworld. The grim-looking god seized on the terrified maiden, and bore her off. She screamed for help, but the horses dashed off at such a speed that pursuit was hopeless. Reaching the bank of a river he was suddenly faced by the nymph Cyane, after whom the stream was named. Rising partly out of the water, she reproached Pluto for his violence, telling him that he should have asked the maid of her mother instead of carrying her off by force.

She even tried to prevent his passage, stretching out her arms as if to stop him, but the god, enraged by her opposition, threw his royal sceptre into the depths of the stream, and urged forward his terrible steeds. The earth at once opened under the blow, and made a yawning gulf right down to Tartarus,

into which the chariot with its burden descended. Cyane was so mortified at this treatment that she was entirely dissolved into tears, and became part of the waters of which she had lately been the guardian deity.

When Ceres learned that her daughter had disappeared, she was overwhelmed with grief, and though she had no idea where to look she wandered nine days and nights in search of her. Coming to Eleusis, she sat down to rest on a stone near to the dwelling of Celeus. His little girl, pitying one who seemed to be a poor lonely old woman, said, "Mother, why do you sit here alone?" and the title sounded sweet to her. The father, too, begged her to come into his house, and at last she yielded. As they walked along, Celeus told her that his little son lay ill with fever, and Ceres stooped and gathered a few poppies. Going in, they found all weeping, for the child, whose name was Triptolemus, seemed at the point of death. Ceres, however, stooped and kissed him, and at once he was restored to health. Gratefully they spread the table and offered her food, and while they ate she put poppy juice in the child's milk.

During the night she arose, and taking the sleeping boy, rubbed his body and uttered a charm over it. Then she laid him in the ashes of the fire, but the

mother, who had been watching, uttered a shriek, and springing forward, snatched him up. Ceres, assuming her proper form, then told her that her interference had prevented her child from being made immortal. She promised, however, that he should grow up to be famous, and to teach many nations how to use the plough, and win the rewards of labour from the earth. At a later period he travelled over the world in the chariot of Ceres, drawn by winged dragons, teaching men agriculture, and bestowing on them the grain given him by the goddess.

In her wanderings, Ceres came back to Sicily, and to the banks of the stream of Cyane. The nymph, having been transformed, could not speak, but she bore to the feet of the goddess the girdle of Proserpine, which had fallen into the stream, and it was at once recognized. Then Ceres understood that her daughter had been carried off, and laid for a time the curse of barrenness on the land which had witnessed the deed. But learning from the all-seeing Sun-god (or, according to another account, from Arethusa), what had happened, and that Jupiter had agreed to allow Pluto to carry off Proserpine to be his queen, she appeared before the king of the gods to demand her return. Jupiter tried to reconcile her to her loss, pointing out that Pluto was his own brother, and

that it was an honour to her daughter to be made his queen. But Ceres insisted that her child should be restored, and at length he agreed, on condition that she should not have taken food while staying in the underworld, for that was in accordance with the decrees of the Fates.

But it chanced that Proserpine, walking in the garden of Pluto, had plucked a pomegranate and eaten a few of the seeds, so that Pluto had the right to keep her. Ceres had vowed that, until her daughter was restored, there should be no harvest, and the earth was suffering under her displeasure. The labour of the husbandman brought no reward, and the earth, bare and unlovely, was threatened with famine. So Jupiter intervened, and an agreement was come to by which Proserpine was to spend part of the year with her mother and the rest as queen of Hades.

Ceres now, with her recovered child, returned to her place in the Olympian seats, the harvests sprang up abundantly, the trees assumed their verdant dress, and the flowers again adorned the earth. But during the absence of Proserpine in the halls of Pluto the earth still mourns her loss, until her return heralds the joys of Spring,

Another Nature-deity was Pan, the god of the woods and meadows, of flocks and herds, a son of

Mercury and a Dryad. His dwelling was among the caves and valleys of the mountains, and in the recesses of the woods. His appearance was peculiar and repulsive, for small horns sprouted from his forehead, his nose was misshapen, and his legs were represented by the shaggy hind-legs and the hoofs of a goat. The shepherds and belated wanderers dreaded meeting with this fearsome being, especially at night, and when the gloom of the forest or the waste caused an attack of sudden fright it was thought to be due to Pan. Hence such a sudden, unreasoning attack, or *panic*, as we still call it, was spoken of as a *panic* fear.

However, though Nature can inspire fear, its usual aspect is mild, joyous, and kindly, and so Pan, though dreadful when annoyed, was a jolly god, fond of hunting, of music (he played the syrinx, or Pan's-pipes) and dancing; also of making love to the nymphs, with whom he often danced and sported. The silence of the hot hours in the middle of the day, when all is still in hot countries, and even men usually indulge in a *siesta*, was explained on the ground that Pan was resting, asleep in some cave or shady nook, and the birds, beasts, and insects were hushed so as not to disturb him. The Greeks were therefore careful not to disturb those hours with clamour, for fear of arousing the sleeping Pan.

The vine, with its luscious fruit, and the wine, so highly esteemed by the ancients, made from the juice of its grapes, was thought to be such a wonderful gift to men that it was due to a special god, Dionysus, or Bacchus. The vine was the highest type of the generous fruitfulness of the earth, so Bacchus was the god of the springing sap, and of vegetation generally. The cheering and enlivening effect of wine, too, was reflected in the character of the god, who is always represented as young, blooming, joyous, and full of good-will to mankind. Since wine promotes sociality, Bacchus was the promoter of civilization, of peace, and of law.

He is represented as the son of Jupiter and Semele, and was cared for by the nymphs in his infancy. Then Silenus, son of Pan, the oldest of the Satyrs, took charge of him, and is often represented with him. While wandering in the forest, Bacchus found the vine, and made from its fruit a drink which delighted the satyrs and nymphs who accompanied him. Under its influence they became excited, and gave vent to their feelings in shouting, singing, and dancing.

Bacchus then went abroad through the earth, even as far as India, teaching men how to cultivate the vine. People welcomed the god and his gift with joy. They joined in the revels of his followers—

A Bacchante
Lord Leighton

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fauns, satyrs, and nymphs—the Bacchanalia which were part of his worship. In these the intoxicating effect of wine was illustrated, and its effect, when used in excess, in depriving man of his reason for a time, is shown in some of the myths of Bacchus. Thus when Pentheus, King of Thebes, sought to prevent the worship of Bacchus, his mother and her sisters, who were under the frenzy inspired by the god, took him for a wild animal and tore him to pieces.

There is a well-known story connected with Bacchus which, like so many of these old tales, tries to account for a curious fact in nature which seemed to the Greeks to call for an explanation. Among the forms in which gold is found, it occurs in some cases in small grains in the beds of rivers, being washed down from the rocks and soil containing it. The Pactolus, a small stream in Lydia, was such a river, and the reason why its sands were mixed with grains of gold is explained in the following story.

Midas, king of Phrygia, a worshipper of Bacchus, was a wealthy and avaricious monarch. On one occasion some of his servants found Silenus and brought him to the palace of Midas, where he was treated with great honour. Bacchus, who was very fond of his old tutor, to show his approbation, bade Midas ask any favour he would. The greedy and foolish king, not content with his already vast wealth,

prayed that everything he touched might be turned into gold. The prayer was granted, but in a terribly literal way which he had not expected. When food was set before him the dish, to his delight, became pure gold at his touch, but alas! the food also shared the same fate before he could swallow it. He raised the wine-cup in his hand, and it immediately became gold, but the cooling draught, the instant it touched his lips, was also turned into the metal which he had so loved, but which he now began to loathe.

His soft, luxurious couch offered him splendid discomfort the moment he attempted to lie down on it, and the wretched king, unable to eat, drink, or rest, threatened with starvation in the midst of plenty, implored the god to take back his gift. Bacchus, taking pity on him, told him to bathe in the waters of Pactolus, whereupon he was relieved of the fatal gift which he had foolishly craved. The sands of the river, however, have ever since yielded gold, his power having been transferred to it.

CHAPTER V: THE LESSER DEITIES OF EARTH

Comparison with Fairies, Elves, Trolls, Gnomes, Mermaid—Satyrs, Fauns, Nymphs: Oreads, Naiads, Dryads, Hamadryads—Story of Dryope and the Lotus—Story of Echo and Narcissus — Story of Erysichthon—Story of Rhœcus—Vertumnus and Pomona—The Horæ

CHAPTER V

The Lesser Deities of Earth

THE idea of peopling the wild or lonely places of the earth with imaginary supernatural beings was by no means confined to the ancient Greeks, or to ancient times. On the contrary, every nation has its own brood of these, which are wonderfully hard to kill, and many of them remain even now as objects of more or less real belief among the ignorant, while to educated people they are only interesting fancies. The same process which gave rise to the nereid has given birth to the mermaid, which has not even yet been entirely banished from the ocean caves. So, too, we have the trolls and gnomes of Norse and German folk-lore, and the elves and fairies, the " good people " who still exist, at least for the old folks, in many parts of rural Britain and Ireland. We feel tempted, as in the case of a certain mysterious personage much in vogue at Christmas-time, to *pretend* to believe in them still.

The less important but far more numerous beings, some of which have been already mentioned, were of

several kinds. The Satyrs helped to people the recesses of the forest, which showed such abundance of life that the ancients imagined they must shelter intelligent beings as well. They embodied the wild, free, ungoverned life of the woodland, so their days were filled with pleasures; hunting, dancing, and sporting with the nymphs, who, however, usually fled from them, and often making themselves intoxicated with wine. They, like Pan, were repulsive in appearance, with small horns on their foreheads and the lower part of the body goat-like. The Fauns were a Roman idea, and were confused with the satyrs, having a similar but even more grotesque appearance. As time went on, however, artists represented them as differing very little from human beings.

The life, beauty, and movement of Nature also gave rise to the Nymphs, joyous and graceful creatures having the appearance of beautiful maidens, the word nymph indeed, originally meaning a maiden. The streams, murmuring over their shallow beds, rippling over the pebbles, making music in their cascades, and imparting life and sweetness to the land; the rivers, with their deeper waters; the trees, with their waving arms and their whispering leaves, now vigorous, now drooping; the pools, the mountains, the valleys, were all inhabited by nymphs.

The mountain-nymphs were Oreads, bold, swift, and graceful, who attended Diana on her hunting expeditions, slaying all the beasts of the chase, whether fierce or gentle. The Naiads were nymphs of the springs, streams, and lakes, and were especially associated with the water-lilies. The oreads and the naiads were immortal, just as the mountains endure and the streams "go on for ever," but the Dryads, or tree-nymphs, came into being with the individual trees which formed their abode, and perished when they were destroyed. The Hamadryads are specially associated with the oak-trees, yet Pomona, who is represented as a hamadryad, was the especial guardian of the apple-orchards, though she presided over all the fruit-trees.

The story of Dryope shows how punishment overtook those who destroyed a tree or plant which contained a nymph, and it was fortunate that only an occasional tree was so inhabited. Dryope, walking out with her sister Iole and her little son to gather flowers with which to decorate the altars of the nymphs, saw a lotus plant growing near the water. Plucking some of the purple blossoms, she gave them to the child, when Iole noticed that the plant was bleeding, for it so happened that it was the abode of the nymph Lotis, who had been changed into this form. Dryope turned to flee, but it was too late,

she was already rooted to the spot, and while begging for forgiveness began to put forth leaves, and was herself turned into a lotus plant.

While still able to speak, she begged that she might be protected from violence, and that her son might often be brought to play by her side, and taught to protect every plant and flower, since it might be some unfortunate being like herself, or the abode of a nymph.

A famous story is told of the oread Echo, whose name will be at once recognized. The invisible being whose voice so often repeats the words of anyone calling aloud in the woods or valleys must have greatly puzzled people who knew nothing of the reflection of sound, and it would have been strange if a myth had not arisen to account for the marvel. Echo was a beautiful nymph, a favourite and frequent companion of Diana. She was, however, as occasionally happens in the case of more modern nymphs, far too fond of chattering, and Juno was so displeased at her forwardness that she deprived her of her voice, except so far as to be able to repeat words said to her.

Some time afterwards she fell in love with Narcissus, a youth famous for his beauty, the son of the river-god Cephissus, but as she could only mimic what he said, he was naturally not attracted to her. He

Echo and Narcissus
Solomon J. Solomon, R.A. 60

therefore repulsed her, saying, "I would rather die than thou shouldst have me." "Have me!" she repeated, but in vain. Then in despair she wandered amongst the caves and the rocks, and faded away until nothing was left of her but her voice, which may still be heard.

Now Narcissus was not only hard-hearted towards Echo, but he disdained all the other nymphs, for he was full of conceit. One of them prayed that he might be punished by learning for himself what it was to love and to meet with no return of affection. The goddess of Love granted the prayer, and brought punishment upon him. One day he caught sight of his reflection in the clear water of a stream, and fell violently in love with it. He could not bear to leave the spot, and often tried to embrace the beautiful being he saw in the water, until at length he pined away and died, and was changed into the flower which bears his name.

In the story of Dryope the offence punished was an unintentional one, but upon another offender, Erysichthon, who was full of impiety, a far more dreadful punishment fell. In a grove sacred to Ceres stood an ancient oak, on which votive offerings often hung, and round which the Dryads, hand in hand, often danced in a ring. This oak the impious man told his servants to cut down, but they feared the

anger of the deities, and hung back. Caring nothing for the goddess, he seized an axe himself, and buried the blade in the tree, which seemed to shudder and groan, while blood trickled from the wound. One of those who stood by reproached Erysichthon and warned him that retribution would surely follow, but the rash man struck him down, nor did even the voice of the nymph of the tree move him. At last the tree fell, and the Dryads besought Ceres to punish the criminal.

Swift and terrible was the doom. Ceres sent an oread in her own dragon-drawn chariot, to icy Scythia, where Famine, and Cold, and Fear dwell. Brought back in the chariot, Famine entered the home of Erysichthon while he slept, folded her wings about him, and breathed upon him. He awoke, raving with hunger, which from that time was never satisfied. All he had was spent in the vain attempt to still the pangs of hunger, until he had nothing left but his daughter, whom he sold into slavery. Escaping to the sea-shore, she was changed by Neptune into the form of a fisherman, and assured her owner, who was pursuing her, that she had seen no one there but herself. When he had gone away she assumed her proper form and returned home. Several times this happened, Neptune giving her each time a different shape, and at last, her father's hunger grew so great

that he began devouring his own limbs, and so miserably perished.

A very different story is that of Rhœcus, who, seeing an oak just about to fall, carefully propped it up. The oak was the home of a hamadryad, who would have perished with the tree but for this timely help. The nymph therefore thanked him, and asked him to name his reward, and when the bold youth asked for her love, she granted his request. He promised undying constancy to her, and she told him to return an hour before sunset, and in the meantime she would send a bee to remind him of his vow. Later in the day he was sporting with his companions, and when the bee came he brushed it aside, injuring it. Then he suddenly remembered, and hastened, too late, to the trysting-place. But he saw no one there, and the voice of the nymph told him that as he had scorned and bruised her messenger, he had shown that he had not the tender and sympathetic heart which alone she could love, and he could never see her more.

The wooing of Vertumnus, the god of gardens and the seasons, had a happier ending. He loved the beautiful Pomona, possibly because apple-trees are a very desirable addition to gardens. This nymph had often been wooed, by Pan, Sylvanus, and many of the satyrs, as well as by Vertumnus, but she had

refused them all. Vertumnus assumed all the forms appropriate to his changing seasons, and as ploughman, haymaker, reaper, vine-dresser, fisherman, and even warrior, he was still rejected.

At last he took on the guise of an old woman, won her confidence by praising her fruit, especially, her grapes, pointed out that the vine was lovingly entwined round the elm-tree, and advised her to cling to one of her many lovers, of whom Vertumnus was specially praised.

Then he told her the story of the nymph who had spurned her lover Iphis, and when in his despair he had hanged himself, and the nymph was watching his funeral, the gods had turned her hard heart to stone. Then the handsome god stood before her without disguise, and at last she rewarded his perseverance by giving him her hand.

The Seasons showed such marked contrasts that the Greeks invented a separate goddess for each, who ranked among the minor divinities. They were called Horæ, and were three in number, for Winter, as already mentioned, was not regarded as a season. They were gentle and joyous maidens, often represented as crowned with flowers and dancing in a ring, as Spring, Summer, and Autumn succeed each other in a cycle. Separately, the Hora representing Spring was depicted crowned with flowers, the one of Summer

bearing a sheaf of corn, and that of Autumn with her hands full of clusters of grapes and other fruits.

The Horæ were also the deities of the hours, which accounts for their helping to yoke the horses to the chariot of the sun every morning and to unyoke them in the evening. They were, in addition, connected with the clouds, hence they were said to open and close the gates of heaven, as when the gods wished to pass from Olympus to Earth, or to return to their celestial abodes; they also poured down the welcome rains, thus giving life to flowers and fruits.

CHAPTER VI: DEITIES OF THE SKY AND AIR—I

Description of Aurora: Dawn and Sunset—Story of Tithonus: the Cricket or Grasshopper—Story of Cephalus and Procris—Story of the Dog, Tempest—Morning and Evening Stars: the Hesperides and the Golden Apples—Æolus and the Winds—Æneas and the Winds—Ulysses and the Winds

CHAPTER VI

Deities of the Sky and Air—I

THE principal divinities who represented the wonders of the Sky, Apollo and Diana, the Sun-god and the Moon-goddess, have already been dealt with, and Aurora, the Dawn-goddess, has been mentioned in connection with Apollo. In the older mythology the Dawn, Eos, was the sister of the deified Sun and Moon. Like them, Aurora is represented as rising out of the eastern ocean and driving in her chariot across the sky. She had the form of a beautiful maiden, and is often described as "rosy-fingered," or "rosy-armed," a reference to the rosy light of dawn. In the poem *Hail, Smiling Morn,* it is she

"Whose rosy fingers ope the gates of day,"

ready for the appearance of the glorious sun. She has large wings, with plumage the tints of which, like those of the morning sky, are constantly changing. On her forehead she bears a star, and in her hand a torch, for her light is feeble in comparison with that

which is so soon to follow. As she passes, the plants and flowers, refreshed by the morning dew, raise their heads, and the cock has been represented as uttering his early morning cry as a greeting to Aurora.

A curious story is told of Tithonus, the husband of Aurora. Tithonus was a beautiful youth when Aurora fell in love with him and made him her husband, and Zeus, at her request, bestowed on him the gift of immortality. But Aurora forgot to ask at the same time that he should have the other attribute of the gods granted to him, that of eternal youth. As time went on the goddess noticed that her husband was growing older, and remembered the mistake she had made, but it was too late. Grey hairs came, his strength decayed, and Aurora ceased to love him, though he still dwelt in her palace, and was fed and clothed like a god. As he grew very old and decrepit, and his voice became feeble, she grew weary of seeing him, and at length shut him up in a distant room of the palace. At last she turned him into a grasshopper.

It has been suggested that Tithonus is the sun, in his early morning beauty, which is followed at last by his weakening and final disappearance, while the feeble and meaningless chatter of extreme age are suggested by the chirping of the insect into which the unfortunate husband was changed.

Cupid Asleep
Perrault

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It seems natural that the Dawn should be represented as loving the rising sun, and another myth has been explained in the same way—her love for Cephalus. Some suppose that as Cephalus means *head*, he is the head or spring of the day, the rising sun. The dawn of day often found Cephalus on the mountains, following the chase, a sport of which he was passionately fond. So Aurora fell in love with him and carried him off.

But he had a young wife named Procris, to whom he was devoted. Procris was a great favourite of Diana, and was herself very fond of hunting, and the goddess had given her two wonderful presents, a dog which was so swift that it could outrun not only all other dogs, but even the swiftest of the animals of the chase, and a javelin, a short spear for throwing. This was of an unknown wood, tipped with gold, and whatever object it was aimed at it was certain to strike, returning of its own accord to the thrower. These she had given to her husband, who of course prized them greatly.

When Aurora carried him off he was full of grief, and begged her to allow him to return to his young wife. The goddess tried to make him forget her, but in vain, and at last she yielded to his entreaties and allowed him to go. But she threatened him at the same time that he should repent that he had ever

gone back to Procris. So he went back to his old life, and again spent much of his time in hunting.

When wearied with the heat of the chase, he would often lie down in a shady spot, and cry aloud, "Come, gentle Aura, and, most grateful, refresh me"—Aura simply meaning a light breeze. But someone who overheard him, thinking he was calling a nymph called Aura, foolishly told Procris, who thought that he had ceased to love her. So, determined to find out whether it was true, she hid herself near a spot where he often rested in the heat of the day. Presently Cephalus came, laid himself down on the grass, and called on the breeze.

Hearing this, Procris made a movement which rustled the leaves of the bushes in which she was hid. Cephalus, thinking the noise was made by a wild beast lurking in the thicket, threw his javelin with only too true an aim. A shriek came from the bushes, and Cephalus, rushing to the spot, found his beloved Procris mortally wounded. To his great grief, she died in his arms, and the threat of Aurora was fulfilled. Procris is supposed to represent the dew-drop, which sparkles so beautifully in the rays of the morning sun that it is represented as being beloved by it, and yet it owes its death to the rays beneath which it disappears. For a similar reason Procris is also beloved by the Moon-goddess.

The fate of the wonderful dog is told in another story. The people of Thebes had fallen under the displeasure of the goddess Themis, who sent a monster to ravage their country. Not only were the cattle devoured by it, but even their owners at times fell victims to its ferocity. At last a great hunt was arranged, in the hope of putting an end to the plague. The hunters, among whom was Cephalus, with his marvellous dog, Tempest, set nets and barriers round the place where the monster was lying, but with a light bound he sprang over them. Then they uncoupled the dogs, which had been straining to get loose, but the monster escaped them as easily as a bird would.

Then Tempest was let loose, and shot off on the tracks of the beast like a stone discharged from a sling. Cephalus went to the top of a hill overlooking the plain, and there watched the chase. Time after time it seemed as if the monster must be caught, but he avoided the snapping jaws and darted off in another direction. Just as Cephalus was about to try his javelin, he turned away his eyes a moment, and when he looked again he saw two marble statues in the midst of the plain; you would think the one was flying and the other barking in pursuit. Some god had changed them, so that both should remain unconquered in this wonderful contest of speed.

The evening twilight is so like the dawn that Aurora was associated with that also, and so she drove her chariot across the sky immediately after, as well as before, the god of day. She had a magnificent palace on an island of the west, surrounded by beautiful gardens and flowery meadows, where lovely nymphs joined in graceful dances to the accompaniment of sweet strains of music. Very naturally, Aurora was the mother of Phosphorus, the morning star, and of Hesperus, the evening star, the beautiful planets of dawn and twilight.

Hesperus, according to some accounts, became king of the Western Land, and had a number of beautiful daughters who were called the Hesperides. Others say these were the daughters of Atlas, the god who bears the vault of heaven on his shoulders, and who became the mountain in the north of Africa which bears his name. Helped by a dragon, these maidens guarded the wonderful golden apples (suggested by the gold-flecked sky of evening) which grew in their garden on a tree which had sprung up in honour of the wedding of Jupiter and Juno. Since the evening-star, when visible, is the first to appear as the sun goes down, Hesper is represented as leading the stars, many of whom are his brothers, as they come out to take their places in the sky.

The Greeks thought the winds belonged to the sky,

as well as to the earth, and as they had, of course, no idea of the real distance of the stars, we find a close connection between them. It is a very common thing for a wind to spring up in the morning, or the evening, more so than at any other time, and so Æolus, the wind god, was the son of Aurora. He lived on the rocky island of Æolia, where, with his six sons and six daughters, he feasted in his palace. The winds were his sons, or at least the principal ones. But he kept winds confined in caverns, and let them loose when he thought fit, though he obeyed the orders of the greater gods.

Thus when Æneas, the Trojan hero, was sailing to Italy to found a new kingdom after the destruction of Troy, Juno, who bore enmity to the Trojan race, determined to delay him and cause him suffering, though he was fated to arrive safely in the end. So she ordered Æolus to send Boreas and others of his sons to vex the sea. A terrible storm arose, by which the ships were driven towards the coast of Africa, and Æneas thought his own ship alone had survived.

But Neptune, hearing the uproar, was angry at Juno's interference, rebuked the winds, sent them back to Æolus, and calmed the sea. Some of the ships had been driven ashore, but he got part off with his trident, while others were launched again by Triton

and a sea-nymph, who heaved them off with their shoulders.

Another story of Æolus and the winds is connected with the hero Ulysses, one of the most famous of the Greek leaders in the war against Troy. After the fall of that city, which sent Æneas in search of a new home, Ulysses, like the rest of the Greeks, set sail for his own home. But having blinded the giant Polyphemus, a son of Neptune, that powerful god became his enemy, and though Fate did not permit Neptune to destroy him, for he was destined to reach his kingdom of Ithaca and his loving wife Penelope, the resentment of the god was able to overwhelm him with one disaster after another, and to keep him wandering for many years. The story of the Wanderings of Ulysses, and the marvellous adventures he met with, is told in the "Odyssey," one of the two great works attributed to Homer, the other being the "Iliad," which relates the events leading up to the destruction of Troy.

During his wanderings, Ulysses came to the island of Æolus, who treated him and his men with great kindness and hospitality. When they left to continue their journey, Æolus gave Ulysses a bag, fastened with a silver string, in which he had confined the winds which would have been dangerous to him, and carried him out of the proper course. At the

Homer
Harry Bates

same time, he ordered favourable winds to blow, and the Greeks sailed away with every prospect of a safe passage.

For nine days all went well, Ulysses at the helm, but he could keep up no longer, and was compelled to lie down and sleep. Then the crew fell to talking of the mysterious bag, and at last made up their minds that it must be full of treasure given to their leader by their late host, and that Ulysses had kept so silent about it because he did not intend that they should have any share. So they determined to help themselves, and one, more bold than his companions, untied the bag. Out rushed the winds, and immediately all was in commotion. The storm raged fiercely, and after being driven by the winds in all directions, they found themselves back at the island of Æolus. They besought him again to help them, but he was so indignant that such a poor use had been made of his former kindness that he refused.

CHAPTER VII: DEITIES OF THE SKY AND AIR—II

The Wind-Gods: Eurus, Auster, Boreas and Zephyrus—The Wooing of Boreas—Calaïs and Zethes, Winged Sons of Boreas—The Harpies: Whirlwinds—Conflict of the Harpies with the Sons of Boreas—Æneas and the Harpies—Diana and her Chariot—Selene and Hecate: Witches—Story of Actæon—Story of Endymion—The Rainbow-bridge—Iris—Iris and Achilles—Thaumas and Electra: Electric Light

CHAPTER VII

Deities of the Sky and Air—II

THE chief winds, the North, West, East and South winds, were supposed to be produced by special gods, whose characters were, of course, shown in the nature of the winds themselves. Eurus, the East-wind, and Notus or Auster, the South-wind are not often heard of, but "rude Boreas," the rough, blustering North-wind, and Zephyrus, the mild and gentle West-wind, are often referred to by the poets.

The wooing of Boreas was quite in keeping with his character. He fell in love with Orithyïa, whose sister Procris became the wife of Cephalus, both the sisters being very beautiful maidens. But in spite of all his entreaties, the father of Orithyïa refused to give his daughter to her rather terrible suitor. Then Boreas fell into a rage, as was very usual with him, and said: "I deserved this; for why did I give up my own weapons, my violence, my strength, and my threatening spirit, and turn to prayers, which ill become me?" So, abandoning gentler methods,

he seized the trembling maiden, and, enfolding her with his tawny wings, flew rushing over the tops of the mountains to his palace in the far north, where she became his bride.

Her twin sons, Calaïs and Zethes, had at first nothing very remarkable about them, but as they grew up wings appeared on their shoulders, and they were able to fly with the swiftness of the wind. One of the most famous of the old Greek stories is the expedition of the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. Jason was the leader, and with him were a number of heroes whose names often occur in the old tales. During their wanderings in their ship, the Argo, they met with many wonderful adventures, and in one of these, which we will relate, the two sons of Boreas, who were among the argonauts, were the chief actors.

The sudden whirlwinds which sometimes do great damage by their frightful violence, uprooting trees, wrecking houses, and at times even whirling animals and human beings to a distance, and dashing them to the ground, are so very extraordinary that they gave rise to the fable of the Harpies, fierce monsters each of which had the body and claws of a vulture, but the head of a fair-haired maiden. As the whirlwind seems to devour everything, the Harpies are represented as being so voracious that they would swoop

down and snatch away the food placed before their victims. Often when people were drowned, or children lost, they were thought to have been pounced upon by these monsters.

Phineus was a king of Bithynia, who had married the sister of Zethes and Calaïs, but had treated her very cruelly, and had put out the eyes of her two sons. As a punishment, Jupiter sent the Harpies to haunt him. On their journey, the Argonauts came to his land, and a banquet was prepared for them, but before they could begin eating, down came the monsters and carried the meat from the table. Then Phineus beat his breast, and told his guests how he and his people suffered from them, and that they were almost starved, in spite of their wealth.

Then the two winged brothers rose and told Phineus who they were, reminding him that his own wickedness had brought this plague upon him. They promised, however, that if he would treat their sister and her children kindly in future they would do battle with the monsters. Phineus gladly promised, and afterwards kept his promise too, while Jason cured the eyes of the two children by using magic herbs.

So Calaïs and Zethes took leave of their comrades, sprang into the air, and the battle of the winds began. The palace rocked with the fearful conflict, and

seemed as though it must fall about their ears; the howling blasts tore trees and great rocks from the mountains, so that even the heroes trembled. At last the Harpies were defeated, and fled shrieking towards the south, with the brothers in pursuit, until they fell upon the islands at the mouth of the Acheloüs, of which we shall hear again. These were known for long afterwards as the Isles of the Whirlwinds.

Æneas and his friends landed upon these islands years afterwards, saw cattle roaming about, and killing some of them prepared for themselves a feast. No sooner had they sat down, than a flock of harpies appeared, and with hideous noises carried off the food. The warriors attacked them with their swords, but they were so swift that it was almost impossible to hit them, and when they did they found that their feathers protected them like armour. Before they flew away, one of the harpies foretold all sorts of disasters which should befall the travellers.

The progress of the beautiful, silvery moon through the heavens gave rise, as already mentioned, to the myth of Diana driving her brilliant chariot across the sky, drawn by two white horses. These are not only fewer in number, on account of the smaller size of the moon, but her brilliance and heat being far inferior (in fact the moon gives off practically no heat at all),

they are not so fierce and unmanageable as the fiery steeds which brought poor Phæton to such an untimely end.

Not only were Selene and Diana confused together, but Hecate, another moon-goddess first worshipped by the Thracians, was confused with them. Now as the Moon is placed in the heavens, yet gives light to the earth, and is also the queen of night and of darkness, Hecate was said to bear rule in heaven, on earth, and also in the under-world, the land of shades. She was also represented as having three bodies joined together. It is because of her triple character that Shakespeare speaks of her in *As you Like It* as " thrice-crownèd queen of night."

As time went on, the gloomy and awful character of night became most prominent in the idea of Hecate, and she was said to dwell in the under-world, ruling the ghosts and shades. So she became the goddess of witchcraft and enchantment, and we find her as the mistress of the three dreadful witches in *Macbeth.*

As already mentioned, the crescent moon suggested to the old Greeks a silver bow, which caused Artemis, or Diana, to be represented as bearing a bow, and devoted to hunting. The mystery of the shady groves in the silvery moonlight gave rise to the idea that, after the chase, the goddess loved to gather the

nymphs of the woods and springs who attended her, and in such groves to join in the song and dance. Believing that they might meet such supernatural beings in the forest, people were very loath to venture there at night, and represented it as a very dangerous adventure to fall in with them at any time. The story of Actæon illustrates this.

Actæon was a great hunter, who used to roam the woods with his companions, accompanied by their dogs. One day he rashly ventured into a glade where Diana and her train were bathing in a stream. The goddess, in anger, dashed some of the water over him. Immediately horns began to sprout from his head, his limbs became four slender legs, and to his horror he found himself changing into a stag. His dogs, not recognizing their master, sprang at him, and he bounded away to escape from them. His companions, seeing a stag burst from the thicket, at once took up the chase, calling on Actæon to join them in the sport, little thinking what a dreadful part he was taking in it. He strained every nerve, but it was of no use, the dogs closed in upon him and at last pulled him down, and so he came to a dreadful end.

The moon was a great friend to shepherds, who had to guard their flocks by night against the attacks of wild beasts, which were much more easily seen and

Endymion
G. F. Watts

driven off when the moon was shining than when all was in darkness. Perhaps that is the reason why Diana is represented as falling in love with Endymion, a beautiful youth who tended his sheep on Mount Latmos. One night, looking down from the calm sky, Diana saw Endymion sleeping on Mount Latmos, and was struck with his beauty. She came down, kissed him, and watched over him while he slept. Night after night she visited him, until their love was discovered.

Jupiter, to punish the presumptuous youth, gave him the choice between death and perpetual sleep, during which, if he chose the latter, he was to retain his youthful form. He chose eternal sleep, and Diana continued to visit him, sometimes lying down by his side, at others watching over his flocks and guarding them from beasts of prey. So we find, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Lorenzo saying:

> "Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn,"

and a little later Portia says:

> "Peace, ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion
> And would not be awaked."

It is probable that Endymion is really the setting sun, upon which the moon is represented as looking lovingly down—for the moon may, of course, often be seen well up in the sky before the sun has quite

disappeared—but some think that he is the personification of Sleep.

Among the marvels of the sky, the Rainbow is so striking, so beautiful, and so mysterious, that it is no wonder it worked on the imagination of ancient races. Some thought it, very naturally, the bridge leading to heaven. Among the Greeks it gave rise to the goddess Iris, a beautiful maiden clothed in an ethereal robe of delicate tints like those of the rainbow, or of mother-of-pearl, a robe which sheds brightness wherever she goes. Iris was the messenger of the gods, as Hermes was also, and was frequently sent on errands to earth, and even to the underworld, both by Jupiter and by Juno, on whom especially she waited. These errands she carried out with great swiftness and success.

In the Trojan war, just before the fall of the city, the Greek hero, Achilles, slew the Trojan prince Hector, who was the son of King Priam and the chief hope of Troy, and carried off his dead body. In answer to the prayers of the grief-stricken king, Iris was sent with him to the tent of Achilles, and helped him to persuade that terrible warrior to give up the body of Hector to his broken-hearted old father, that it might receive the last rites with all due honour.

Iris is represented as being the daughter of Thaumas

and of Electra, a lovely goddess who typified the sparkling light of Electricity. Thaumas was a very fanciful being, a good example of the readiness of the Greeks to personify anything in Nature that struck them as being very remarkable. He represented that peculiar mirror-like condition of the sea when it is specially smooth, and reflects with special clearness the light of the sky and the objects on the shore. Thus Iris and her parents are all connected with peculiar light and beauty.

CHAPTER VIII: GODS AND GODDESSES OF THE OCEAN

Oceanus and the Rivers — The Sea-Nymphs — Palace of Oceanus—Neptune and his Chariot—Ages of Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron — The Flood: Deucalion and Pyrrha — The Earth Repeopled — Nereus and the Nereids—Proteus and Aristœus—The Bees—Marriage of Thetis and Peleus—Otus and Ephialtes—The Cyclops—Polyphemus—Acis and Galatea—Scylla and Charybdis—Adventure of Ulysses—Ino and the Sea-Birds

CHAPTER VIII

Gods and Goddesses of the Ocean

THE Sea is so full of wonderful things, and so mysterious, that it was very natural for the ancient races of the world to people it with all kinds of supernatural beings, both beautiful and frightful. They realised that although the rivers run into the sea, yet the water which fills them comes from the sea. So we find that the oldest god of the waters, Oceanus, whose wife was Tethys, was the father of three thousand rivers, or of the gods and goddesses who lived in them, made them flow peacefully or rise in flood at will, and were spoken of as though they were the rivers themselves.

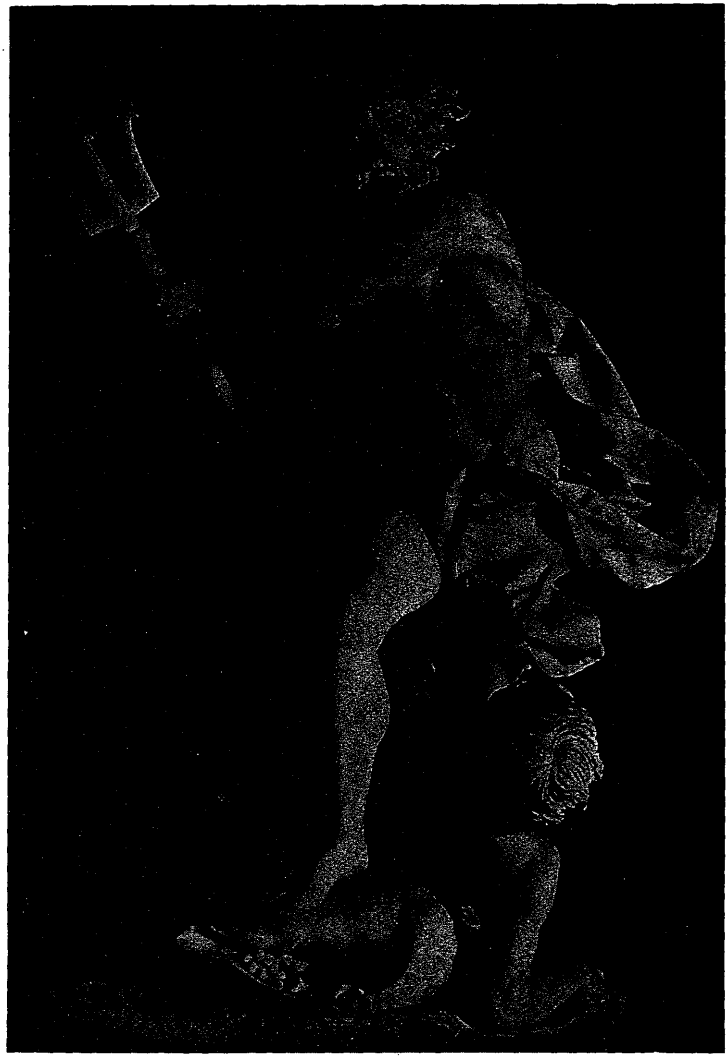
Oceanus and Tethys also had many daughters who were sea-nymphs, beautiful maidens who lived in the caves in the depths of the sea, but who often sported on the surface or played on the shore, or in the cool grottos among the rocks there. We can easily understand how the faint wreaths of vapour which often rise from the surface of warm seas, the foamy crests of waves, or flying spray, quickly disappearing, or

perhaps only half seen in the darkness of the storm or in the sunny distance, became supernatural objects to people who had a strong belief in such things.

The palace of Oceanus was beyond the bounds of the earth, Homer tells us, and was surrounded by beautiful gardens, adorned with all kinds of precious things—corals, amber, brilliant shells, and other sea-treasures.

Oceanus was succeeded in the empire of the waters by Poseidon, or Neptune, who was the brother of Zeus, or Jupiter. The rivers also formed part of his kingdom. Neptune had a splendid palace in the depths of the sea, near the island of Eubœa, though he often visited Jupiter and the other gods on Olympus. His sceptre was a trident, a spear with three prongs, with which he ruled the waves and the storms. With it, too, he could shatter the rocks, and sometimes called forth a spring by striking the earth with it. His chariot was drawn over the surface of the sea by horses with golden manes and brazen hoofs, and their hinder part is often represented by the body and tail of a fish. Before his chariot the sea became smooth, and dolphins and other sea-monsters played around it as it was driven swiftly along.

When Jupiter determined to destroy the world on account of its wickedness, it was Neptune who



Neptune
Adam, Louvre
From a photograph by Levy et ses fils

carried out his will, and the Greek tradition of the Deluge is a very interesting one. We are told that there were several Ages in the history of mankind. The first was the Golden Age, in the far-back times when Cronus was the ruler of the universe. Then men were just and pious, worshipping the gods and living in peace and happiness. The earth brought forth abundantly without labour, and the gods mixed freely among men. Then followed the Age of Silver, when men were less perfect, and the earth not quite so happy a place to live in. In the Bronze Age strife and discord spread and wars were frequent, though men were not yet altogether wicked.

But in the Iron Age men were steeped in crime; violence and deceit, hatred and discord reigned. Truth, purity and honour were cast aside, and the gods withdrew from the earth. Then Jupiter would have burned the world, but that such a great fire might have destroyed Olympus itself, so he called in the help of Neptune. The rivers raged in flood, the waves of the sea broke their bounds and rushed over the land. The rain fell incessantly, until the earth was covered, and mankind had perished, except Deucalion, a just man, and Pyrrha his wife, who were dutiful worshippers of the gods, and they found refuge on Mount Parnassus.

When the waters had gone down, they were told

by an oracle, or message from the gods, to veil their heads, and with unbound garments to cast behind them the bones of their mother. They were horrified at the idea of treating the remains of their parent so irreverently, and greatly troubled, until the idea came to Deucalion that there was a hidden meaning in the oracle. "Is not the Earth the mother of us all," said he, "and are not the stones her bones?" So they obeyed the command, throwing stones behind them. These grew soft and gradually took the shape of human beings, those thrown by Deucalion becoming men, and those thrown by his wife, women. So the earth was peopled again.

Neptune's wife was Amphitrite, one of the fifty daughters of Nereus, who were therefore called Nereids. He was one of the more ancient gods, a kind of "old man of the sea," and embodied some of its characteristics. Thus the sea, though always changing its aspect, seems yet to be always the same. So Nereus was famous for his love of unchanging truth and justice. Like many other sea-deities he had also the gift of seeing into the future.

Proteus, a son of Neptune, had also the gift of prophecy, and he personified, too, the constant changes of the sea, for he had the power to assume any form at will. When he did not wish to let people have the benefit of his wisdom, he would use his

power of changing his shape, so as to avoid them, as in the following story.

Aristæus was the son of a water-nymph named Cyrene, his father being Apollo. He had many flocks and herds, and also kept bees. But all his bees died from some disease, and he went to his mother's river to ask her aid. She heard his voice on the bank, and at her command the stream opened to let him enter her crystal cave, the waters standing up on each side. When he had explained his loss, she told him to go to the aged Proteus, who watched over the sea-calves of Neptune, and he could explain how it had happened, and how to replace the dead swarms.

But she also told him that he would have to chain the god and compel him to answer, and that he would change into dreadful forms so as to escape. "But you have only to keep him fast bound," she went on, "and when he sees that his arts are of no avail he will do as you wish." Then she sprinkled her son with nectar, which filled him with strength and courage, and showed him where to hide in the sea-god's cave.

At noon Proteus came up out of the sea, with his herd of sea-calves, which stretched themselves on the shore. Then he came into his cave and lay down to sleep. Presently Aristæus rushed upon him and

bound him with a chain he had brought for the purpose. Proteus awoke and struggled to get free, changing himself into a fire, then a flood, and then a dreadful wild beast, but the youth would not loose his hold. Then he came back to his own shape, and explained that the bees had been slain in punishment of an evil deed committed by Aristæus, and that he must gain the forgiveness of the nymphs who had done it. He was to build four altars, and sacrifice four of his finest bulls and four cows, then, leaving their carcasses hanging in the grove, he was to return in nine days and see what had happened.

Aristæus did all that the god had said, and on the ninth day he found that a swarm of bees were busily at work, using one of the carcasses as a hive. The ancients had the idea that bees came from the dead flesh of animals. They were used to seeing them make their nests in hollows, as in trees and rocks, and probably the idea of their origin arose from seeing a swarm using the body of an animal for the purpose.

The most beautiful of the Nereids, Thetis, had the same power as Proteus. On account of her wondrous beauty both Jupiter and Neptune sought her as a bride, but as the Fates had foretold that she should have a son who should be greater than his father, it was decided that she should marry a mortal. Peleus, one of the Heroes, was the one to whom the

honour was given, and he set forth to claim his bride. She tried all her arts, changing into several terrifying forms, to escape from her lover, but he was so strong and bold that she had to yield.

The wedding was celebrated by a splendid feast, and the gods and goddesses of Olympus honoured it with their presence. The marriage of Thetis, and the adventures of her famous son, Achilles, are the subjects of some of the most famous of the old Greek stories.

Nothing seems more wild, fierce, and ungovernable than the sea when it is lashed into fury by storms, and so we find that most of the sons of Neptune had such a nature. Two of these, Otus and Ephialtes, when only nine years old, were twenty-seven cubits high and nine broad, a cubit being about half a yard. In the war of the giants against the gods, the two brothers tried to scale the heavens by piling mountains on each other. When they had heaped Ossa on Olympus, and Pelion on Ossa, they were fortunately slain by the arrows of Apollo, or there is no telling what dreadful deeds they might have performed if they had lived to grow up!

The Cyclops, who were the workmen in Vulcan's workshop, of which Mount Etna acted as the chimney, were also sons of Neptune. This shows clearly that the Greeks thought there was a connection between

the fiery outbursts of that volcano and the neighbouring sea. The cyclops were wild, gigantic beings, each having only one eye, placed in the middle of his forehead; rough and uncouth in their behaviour, and with no fear of the gods. The ancients might well imagine such fearful beings responsible for the terrifying outbursts of molten rock, steam-clouds, stones, and ashes from volcanoes.

We should naturally expect to find, seeing how many victims the sea claims, that some of the fabled monsters were devourers of men. Polyphemus, one of the cyclops, was such a character. On one occasion he fell in love with a beautiful nymph, Galatea, and made some attempt, for the first time, to trim his uncouth locks, and make himself more presentable. The maiden, however, favoured another lover, a youth named Acis, and when Polyphemus found them together he took a cruel revenge upon his rival by casting upon him a huge rock. The blood of the murdered lover gushed out from under the rock and became a stream, which bears his name.

We may suppose that the fate of Acis was suggested by that of unhappy mariners mangled by rocks upon the shore in some dreadful storm.

In the Strait of Messina, between Italy and Sicily, were two dangerous obstacles which often proved fatal to mariners, and therefore gave rise to dreadful

legends. One was the rock Scylla, and the other, not far from it, was the whirlpool Charybdis. At certain states of the tide, especially with the wind in certain quarters, currents were formed which swept round and round, and sometimes overwhelmed and swallowed up ships and their crews. Scylla, too, with the cruel jagged rocks lying near it, and the swift currents which swept around and over them, often brought mariners to their death.

We must remember that ships in those far-back ages were far smaller than those we are familiar with, in fact we should think the largest of them only large boats. Unskilful steering, or a sudden gust of wind, would sometimes cause a vessel, while trying to avoid one of these dangers, to fall into the other. So when a person now-a-days is between two dangers, and it is difficult to guard against one without running into the other, we often say he is "between Scylla and Charybdis." Of course the dangers, as often happens even now, were greatly magnified, and dreadful stories were spread as to what took place there.

Charybdis is described as a frightful gulf, into which, three times a day, the waters rushed with dreadful roarings, carrying helpless vessels round and round, and at length plunging them into the abyss. Three times a day, too, the gulf sent the waters

rushing back, with the mangled wrecks and corpses that had been swallowed up. There is a spot off the coast of Norway where a whirlpool is sometimes formed by wind and tide, and in later ages travellers told similar stories about this. There is an old picture which shows this whirlpool like a huge funnel, with helpless ships on the sloping sides being carried round on their way to the bottom.

In the rock Scylla, so the story goes, there was a cave, in which dwelt a terrible monster who gave her name to the rock. She had six heads, each with a long, snake-like neck, and her lower parts were made up of snakes and howling, ferocious dogs. (The howling of dogs, or the cries of any savage beast, may easily be imagined during the raging of a storm). The way in which Scylla served her victims is shown in the adventure of Ulysses and his crew, who had to pass through the straits during their wanderings, which have already been mentioned.

As they neared the fatal spot the howlings of Charybdis filled their ears, but nothing was to be seen of Scylla. So while they were anxiously watching the whirlpool they forgot Scylla, until the monster suddenly stretched forth from her cave her six snaky heads. Each seized an unfortunate mariner in its jaws, while the rest looked on, powerless to help. The suddenness of her attack is in keeping with the

danger of sunken rocks, unsuspected until the moment when the doomed vessel strikes.

The story which accounts for the origin of Scylla is rather curious, because such fearful transformations are generally a punishment for evil deeds or an evil nature, but it is not so in her case. She was a maiden of great beauty, the daughter of a sea-god, and another sea-god, Glaucus, fell in love with her. She would not listen to him, but he was so eager to win her that he asked the help of Circe, who was an enchantress. But Circe was herself in love with Glaucus, so by her magic arts she turned her rival into the monster which has been described.

The beautiful white sea-birds, which stand on the rocks by the sea-shore, and skim over the waters, into which they dive at times in pursuit of fish, seemed to the ancients to be ever seeking something lost beneath the waves. This gave rise to an interesting story, which accounts for the origin of two of their many sea-deities.

Ino, wife of King Athamas, had offended the queen of the gods. Juno therefore sent one of the furies to afflict her husband with madness. In this condition he imagined that Ino and her two children were a lioness and her cubs, and killed one of the poor children. Then Ino fled with the other in her arms, pursued by her husband. Reaching the rocks of the

shore, she flung herself into the sea, but Venus persuaded Neptune to change them into sea-gods. Some of her attendants, seeing the queen disappear in the waves, sprang from the rocks after her, but were turned into birds, which skimmed over the surface of the sea vainly trying to find her.

CHAPTER IX: STORIES OF RIVERS

Tidal Bores: Story of the Seine—Story of Arethusa: Disappearing Streams—Deltas: the Islands of Acheloüs—Conflict of Acheloüs and Hercules—Snakes Strangled by Infant Hercules—The Horn of Plenty—Sudden Floods: Conflict of Scamander and Achilles

CHAPTER IX

Stories of Rivers

THERE are many curious things which happen in connection with rivers, the real reasons for which were not discovered until long after these ancient times with which we are dealing, and the Greeks explained them, as they did other mysterious things in Nature, in their own fanciful way. One of these is the tidal bore, which occurs in many rivers and narrow bays. The waters of the sea, as we know, under the action of the moon, and to a less extent of the sun, are piled up twice in twenty-four hours, or thereabouts, at the places passed in succession by the tidal-wave.

When they sweep into a channel which becomes gradually narrower, the effect becomes more and more marked, especially when the opening faces the incoming tide, and the channel becomes shallower as the wave rushes along. In some cases the tide rushes in in a huge mass, so that the front of it forms a wall of water. The Bay of Fundy shows this effect in a striking way, the tide reaching a height of

70 feet, and the sight is a most wonderful one. Bores of 6 or 7 feet, or even more, are often seen on the Severn and the Seine, and a smaller one on the Trent. These very much puzzled the ancients, and they came to the conclusion that some sea-god or river-god must be rushing up the river for some purpose or other.

A story which arose in connection with the Seine will show the kind of legend that sprang up about such rivers. The course of the Seine is very flat—the level at Rouen, 74 miles up the river, is only 19 feet above that at the mouth. Twice a day the tide comes rushing in, heralded by a wall of water advancing with a tremendous roar, and as fast as a galloping horse. The sound can be heard several miles away, and is the signal for the boats on the river to put off from shore into deep water, where experience has taught the owners they are safer. When the wave reaches them, they are suddenly lifted up and violently tossed about for a short time amid foaming billows. Then the river becomes almost as smooth as before, but several feet higher, and with the stream running swiftly, not to the sea, but towards the source.

The story goes that the Seine was a nymph, the daughter of Ceres and Bacchus, who was one day walking by the sea-shore when she was seen by the

old sea-god, Neptune, who at once fell in love with her and rushed to take possession of her. The nymph, however, did not return his affection, and called on her parents for aid. Just as the god overtook her, they changed her into the river which now bears her name (the old form of Seine was Sequana), and carries joy and fertility through the lands beloved by her parents. The flourishing vineyards and fruitful fields show how Bacchus and Ceres loved the country which is blessed by their daughter.

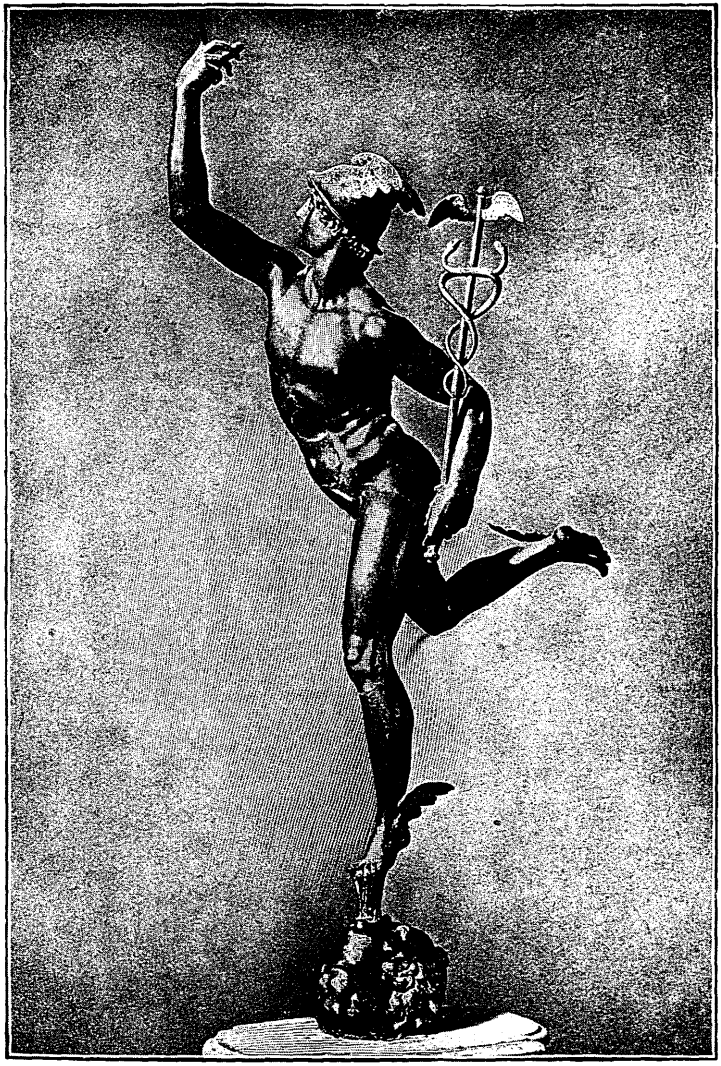
The love of Neptune, however, seems to have been as violent and lasting as it was sudden, for he still rushes in daily, with mad bellowings, hoping to secure her. But she rushes back into the meadows, contrary to the nature of rivers, and so escapes him. Many of the peasants who live near the Seine hold, even now, another kind of myth to account for the marvel, for they, too, have a vague idea that the elements have feelings, as human beings have. They say that it is due to the natural ill-feeling between salt water and fresh, which are unwilling to mix, and that the salt water gets angry, and tries to drive the fresh water back.

When Ceres was wandering in search of her lost daughter, she discovered in Sicily that her child had been carried off, and laid a curse on the land in which this had been done. But as she was sitting by a

stream, the goddess of it rose out of the waters. "O Goddess," said the guardian of the river, "do not be angry with thy faithful land, which does not deserve thy wrath, for it opened when compelled to let Pluto and his unwilling bride pass through. I am Arethusa, and I dwell here as a stranger, for Greece is the land of my birth. But I was carried through the caverns beneath the sea, until I raised my head under the skies of Sicily. While I was running beneath the earth I saw thy daughter, and though her face was sad she was without alarm, for she is the wife of the Infernal King." So Ceres at last knew what had happened to her beloved daughter.

Arethusa promised to tell her how she came to undergo such a marvellous change, that a river which flowed in Greece should reappear in the island of Sicily. So when Ceres was once more restored to happiness she visited Arethusa again to hear the story, which ran as follows. Arethusa was a beautiful nymph, but disliked the praise of her beauty, and would not that any should make love to her, for all her thoughts were taken up with the delights of the chase. She was a constant companion of Diana, whose quiver she often carried.

But one day, as she stood by the river Alpheus, the god of the river saw and loved her. Rising from



Flying Mercury
Giovanni di Bologna

his waters, he besought her to be his bride, but Arethusa fled in terror. The god pursued her over hill and crag, and through the trackless woods, but though she was as swift as he, she was not so strong, and at last became exhausted. Then she called on Diana to aid her, and the goddess cast a thick cloud about her. But Alpheus would not depart, and wandered about calling for her.

Then her protectress turned her into a stream, but when he saw this the river-god resumed his watery form, and sought to mingle his stream with hers. But Diana made the ground to open, and the stream of Arethusa disappeared into the opening, and so through underground caverns was carried under the sea, as we have seen, to rise again in Sicily. The Greeks had seen streams which were suddenly lost in this way, and had wondered what became of them, and it is very likely that this story arose through their finding in Sicily a stream which was called by the people there by a name similar to that of one of their own rivers.

Such disappearing streams are occasionally met with in many countries, especially where the rocks are of limestone, in which, by the action of water in dissolving the rock, caverns are often formed. Those who have seen the Peak Cavern, in Derbyshire, will remember the underground stream along which

visitors can walk for some distance, until it disappears. Some of the streams in the Pennine Chain also travel underground for some distance, and then re-appear.

It often happens that shoals and sandbanks are formed at the mouth of a river by the sand and mud carried down, and sometimes these appear above the waves as islands, forming a delta. The old Greeks saw that such islands must have been formed by the river, and so they invented an explanation for the islands at the mouth of the Acheloüs, a river famous for the stories connected with it. It so happened that while some of these were barren and unlovely, another, at a distance from the rest, was fertile and beautiful, and we also find this difference accounted for.

Theseus, the hero who slew the monster known as the Minotaur, was once returning from a hunting expedition to his home at Athens, when he came to the river Acheloüs and found it in flood. The god of the river, who of course bore the same name, therefore invited him, with his companions, to stay as a visitor in his cave until the torrent had gone down and he could safely cross, and the invitation was accepted. The cave was built of pumice stone, and the floor was carpeted with soft moss, while the walls and roof were decorated with rows of beautiful shells.

Tables were set, and bare-footed nymphs spread upon them a banquet, afterwards bringing wine in bowls adorned with gems.

After the banquet, Theseus, looking out towards the distant sea, asked whether he could not distinguish an island, or more than one, at the mouth of the river. Acheloüs replied that there were indeed five islands, and told him the following story as to how they came there. They were once Naiads, who slew ten bullocks, and made a sacrifice, to which they invited the gods of the neighbourhood, but neglected to invite Acheloüs. So while they were holding their joyous festival near the mouth of the river, the god took vengeance on them for the disrespect they had shown him.

Gathering his waters, he rushed down in a raging flood, tearing woods from woods, and fields from fields, and finally tore away the spot where the Naiads were holding their feast, and hurled both land and nymphs into the sea. So the land and the nymphs perished together, and the five islands were all that remained of them.

Then Acheloüs pointed out to his guests that there was a beautiful island at some distance from the others, and told them that that also was once a beautiful nymph. Acheloüs loved her, and she returned his love, but her father was opposed to

them, and in his anger flung his daughter from the rocks into the sea. But the river-god received her, and bore her up as she swam away from the land. Then he prayed to Neptune, the great ruler of the ocean, to allow her an honoured place in his waters, and the prayer was granted. She grew hard and cold, earth covered her body and limbs, trees and flowers sprang up on the fast growing earth, and she was fixed in the sea in the form they now beheld.

One of the guests refused to believe that such changes of form were possible, for he was a despiser of the gods, but Acheloüs assured him that he himself had the power of changing into different shapes, though only a few, appearing sometimes as a snake, sometimes as a bull, with enormous strength in his horns. Then he sighed and looked sad, whereupon Theseus asked him the reason. The god replied that it was not a pleasant thing to speak of his own defeats, but as it was glorious to have fought against such a hero as had overcome him, he would tell them of his conflict with the mighty Hercules.

Years before, he had fallen in love with the beautiful Deianira, and had asked her father for her hand. But there were other suitors, among them the demigod Hercules, the son of Jupiter. The father promised to give her to the one who should prove the bravest of her suitors, when the rest at once

withdrew their claim, leaving Hercules and Acheloüs to settle the matter between them. A terrific conflict took place, for the god was of vast size and strength, but he had Hercules for his foe.

Long and fiercely they wrestled, but at last Hercules got a grip of the neck of the river-god, and pressed him down upon the sand. Then Acheloüs used his power to change himself into a snake, and twisting his body into winding folds, darted forth his forked tongue with dreadful hissings. But Hercules laughed, saying, "It was the labour of my cradle to conquer snakes." This referred to two great snakes which were sent to destroy him when he lay as an infant in his cradle, but Hercules seized one in each hand and strangled them. He reminded his opponent, too, that he had slain the Hydra, although for every snaky head he had cut off two new ones grew. Then, seizing him by the neck he began to strangle Acheloüs, who was obliged to turn into his other form, that of a huge bull.

But Hercules, seizing him by his tremendous horns, bent his head to the ground, and in the struggle tore one of them off. So the conflict ended, and Deianira became the bride of the victor. The horn thus torn off was consecrated to the goddess of Plenty, and may often be seen, in pictures or carvings, filled to overflowing with all kinds of beautiful fruits.

The mountainous nature of many parts of Greece and Asia Minor has a peculiar effect on the character of the rivers, which can also be noticed in our own country under similar conditions. The rains of winter fill the beds of the streams with rushing torrents, while in summer the wide, shingly channels are nearly dry. Even in summer, a heavy thunderstorm among the mountains, of which the people in the plains below may know nothing, will often, almost without warning, send a flood roaring down, overwhelming any cattle or human beings who may be caught unawares.

Such sudden, raging floods were put down to a fit of anger on the part of the deity of the river, an idea well illustrated by a famous incident in the siege of Troy. Achilles, after the death of his friend Patroclus, wreaked his fury on the Trojans so that they fled before him, leaving many a hero lying dead on the field, victims of the avenging arm of the greatest of the Greeks. Among others, Achilles slew one of the sons of Priam, King of Troy, and threw his body into the river Scamander, with insulting words.

The god of the river, which was now choked with dead bodies, was favourable to Troy, which had long paid honours to him, and he called on Achilles to desist from the slaughter. As he refused, the god

attacked him with the utmost fury, pouring his waves, laden with dead bodies and with wreckage brought down by the flood, upon the hero. Achilles struggled long to escape from the buffetings of the river, which surrounded him whichever way he turned.

Then Scamander called upon a brother stream for aid, and both rivers attacked the hero, who, tossed and bruised, appealed to the greater gods. Neptune and Minerva came to his help, but the enraged river-god refused to cease his attacks, until Vulcan came on the scene, and with his flames so scorched the gods and dried up their waters that they were compelled to beg for mercy.

The sudden floods above described often fall almost as rapidly as they rise, and it is not surprising that, on this occasion, the disappearance of the raging torrents should be ascribed to the interference of the god of fire, as being the element most hostile to water.

CHAPTER X: STORIES OF ANIMALS—I

Origin of these Stories—The Wolf: Lycaon—Werewolf and Loup-garou—The Lynx: Lyncus—The Apes—Midas and the Ass's Ears—Story of Pan and Syrinx: Pan's Pipes—The Great and Little Bears: Calisto and Arcas

CHAPTER X

Stories of Animals—I

THE Greeks, finding that many animals had evil qualities very like those found in some human beings, explained the fact, as we have seen, by supposing that they were at first men and women, but had been changed into the form of beasts as a punishment for their wickedness. In some cases, however, the change of form into that of a beast or a bird was sent in mercy, to save those so changed from a worse fate, but the character of the person changed was always preserved, to some extent, in the new form. In the present chapter you will read some of the stories suggested by the peculiarities of animals.

The Wolf is a fierce and cruel animal which in many countries has been a great enemy to man, carrying off his sheep and other animals, and at times, when made bold by hunger, attacking not only horses and cattle, but even man himself. Children, indeed, have been often carried off by them. Not only among the old Greeks, but in all parts of

Europe, we find the idea of men being turned into wolves.

The *loup-garou* of the French, and the *werewolf* of our own forefathers, were frightful beings, men in wolf-shape, who were more cruel and bloodthirsty than ordinary wolves. In some stories men had power to take this form, especially at night, and roamed in search of victims.

When Jupiter, in the old Greek story, was announcing to the assembled gods that he had determined to punish the wickedness of mankind by destroying the race, he told them of the guilt of Lycaon and its punishment.

One evening, just as twilight was darkening into night, the king of the gods came to the abode of Lycaon, King of Arcadia, and bade the people pay their adorations to him. As they were doing this, Lycaon mocked at them, and said to himself that he would put it to the proof whether this was really a god or no. So he arranged to murder his guest while he slept under his roof. Not content with this, he slew a hostage who was in his hands, and having boiled parts of his flesh and roasted other parts, he set these on the table as dishes for the god.

But Jupiter, in his anger, caused his house to be devoured by avenging flames, and the wicked king fled to the woods. Yet though his nature was the

same, his form had changed. His garments had turned into hair, and his arms had become legs. He was still hoary, as before, his eyes were bright, and his changed features still expressed the same ferocity. Attempting to speak, he howled aloud, and with his old delight in blood he savagely attacked the sheep. Thus he was turned, for his crimes, into a wolf, and his race has the same nature as himself.

The story of the Lynx is very similar. This cowardly animal rarely dares to attack men, but prowls noiselessly about by night seeking for defenceless prey. Here, again, the beast shows the qualities of the man who was changed into this form. You will remember how Ceres promised that the child Triptolemus should bring blessings to men. When he had grown up to be a young man, she sent him in her chariot, drawn by two dragons, to take the seeds she gave him to different nations, and teach them how to plant them and grow bountiful harvests.

In his journey he came to the coast of Scythia, where Lyncus was king. Entering the king's house, he told who he was, and how he had travelled there. "I bring the gifts of Ceres," said he, "which, scattered over the wide fields, are to yield you the fruitful harvests, and wholesome food." But Lyncus was envious, and could not bear the thought that his people should have to thank a stranger for such great

gifts. So he determined to slay him while he slept, and to make out that it was he who had bestowed such a boon on his people.

He treated Triptolemus with great hospitality, however, for he was too cowardly to attack him while he could defend himself, and led him to a room where he made him comfortable for the night. But when his guest was fast asleep, Lyncus crept into the chamber with a drawn sword to kill him. Ceres, however, was watching over her favourite and messenger, and just as the wicked king was about to plunge the sword into the breast of the sleeping stranger, it dropped from his hand. Falling on all-fours, he found that he had become a wild beast, and rushing from his palace he roamed the woods for the future as a lynx.

Of all the lower animals the Apes are most like human beings in form, and, as we might expect, there is an account of their human origin. There was a race of men called Cercopians, who lived, according to one account, on an island near Sicily, according to another, in the north of Africa. These people were guilty of dreadful crimes, treating any travellers who came to their land in a most barbarous fashion. Truthfulness was unknown among them, and they would steal whatever they could lay their hands upon, while trickery and deceit seemed natural to them.

One writer says that when their punishment fell upon them they were about to insult Jupiter himself, as he came among them to see how they would receive him. Be that as it may, the Father of the Gods determined to make them look like men, and yet horribly unlike them. So he contracted their limbs, and flattened their noses, bent back from their foreheads; while he furrowed their faces with the wrinkles of old age. He also took from them the power of language, which they had used so often for falsehood and perjury, so that they could only make harsh jabberings, and covered their bodies with long yellow hair. Then he placed them on the islands which were called from them the Pithecusæ, or islands of the apes. So now we understand why monkeys are so full of mischievous tricks, and are so fond of snatching at anything within reach.

The Ass is looked upon, justly or unjustly, as a stupid animal, and this idea was evidently shared by the Greeks, as the story of Midas shows. You will remember how Midas foolishly asked that everything he touched might be turned into gold, and how the fatal power, fortunately for him, was taken from him. But we are told that his stupidity still remained, and was fated again to prove an injury to him, and this is how it came about.

The god Pan had invented a musical instrument by fastening together with wax a number of hollow reeds, side by side. These he cut of different lengths, and stopped one end with wax. Then, on blowing across the openings, music was produced. This instrument is called the syrinx, or Pan's pipes, and used to be a favourite one with showmen, indeed it is still often used in connection with the "Punch and Judy" show. The story of the way in which Pan's pipes came to be invented is a very interesting one.

There was a certain nymph named Syrinx who was one of the band of Diana, and, like her companions, so devoted to the joys of the chase that she turned a deaf ear to all lovers, though often sought by the spirits of the wood. One day Pan met her, and tried to woo her, paying her many compliments, and telling her she was as beautiful as the goddess of the silver bow. But Syrinx fled from him, and the god pursued her. Reaching the bank of a river, she saw that she could not escape from her pursuer, and called on the nymphs of the river to help her.

Just as he thought he had caught her, and threw his arms around her, he found himself clasping a group of reeds, into which the nymphs had changed her. He sighed with disappointment, and the air,

Apollo Citharædus
Vatican

passing through the reeds, made mournful music. The sound suggested an idea to the god, and saying, "Thus, at any rate, you shall be mine," he cut a number of the reeds of different lengths, and made the instrument which he called by her name.

Pan was very proud of his music, and warbled little melodies to groups of admiring nymphs. He was evidently not a very good judge, for he thought it was better than the music of Apollo's lyre, and challenged the god to a trial of skill. The mountain-god Tmolus was to be the umpire, and the nymphs and others, among whom was Midas, stood around to witness the contest. Pan was the first to try his skill, and brought forth from his reeds a pleasing tune, which especially delighted Midas.

Then Apollo stepped forth, his brows crowned with laurel from Parnassus, the mount beloved of the Muses, and his purple robe sweeping the ground. In his left hand he held his lyre, adorned with ivory and gems, while his right hand held the plectrum. Then, striking the strings, he made the air resound with strains of such wonderful sweetness that Tmolus at once proclaimed him the victor.

All received his verdict with applause except

Midas, who complained that it was unjust. What followed is told very quaintly by the old poet who tells the story. "But Apollo does not allow his stupid ears to retain their human shape: but draws them out to a length, and he fills them with grey hairs, and makes them unsteady at the lower part, and gives them the power of moving. The rest of his body is that of a man; in one part alone is he condemned to punishment; and he assumes the ears of the slowly-moving ass."

Midas was, of course, very much ashamed of this mark of disgrace, and tried to hide it with the folds of a purple turban. But the monstrous ears could not be hid from the servant who cut his hair, though he was threatened with death if he revealed the secret. The trial of keeping silent about such a marvellous discovery was so great, that the barber felt he must relieve his feelings in some way. So he went out into the fields, dug a hole in the ground, and whispered into it, "The king has the ears of an ass!" When he had said this several times he filled in the earth again, burying the secret, and went away feeling more satisfied.

But a thick group of reeds began to grow on the spot, and when, a year later, they were fully grown, they betrayed the barber. For the gentle South wind moved over them and set them whispering, and

they spread abroad the secret that had been buried there.

The story of the two Bears is not due to any bear-like qualities in those who were changed into that shape, but, as we shall see, it offers an explanation of a well-known fact connected with the stars.

Calisto, the daughter of that Lycaon who was turned into a wolf, deeply offended Juno, who changed her into a black bear. She lifted up her hands, such as they were, to heaven (an attitude very common in the bear) to ask for help, but she could only utter groans, and no relief was sent in answer. She had often hunted the bear, as well as other animals, in happier days, but now she shunned the wild beasts, for she still remembered what she had been, and dwelt in fear of them. Often she prowled sadly around her old home by night, and often fled in fear from the baying hounds.

So the years passed by, very sadly for poor Calisto, until one day she saw her son Arcas, grown to be an active and daring youth, and as fond of hunting as his mother had been. Forgetting in her love, and her joy at seeing him, the form which she now bore, she gazed upon him, and advanced with outstretched arms to embrace him. The young man did not, of course, recognise his mother in her savage form, and, thinking that the beast was about to attack him,

raised his javelin to kill her. But Jupiter would not allow such a dreadful thing to happen as that the mother should be slain by her own son, so just as Arcas was about to strike the fatal blow, the god turned him also into a bear.

Then, to compensate them for their misfortunes, he turned them both into constellations, or star-groups, and placed them on high amid the stars. But when Juno saw the great honour that had been given to her whom she hated, and to her son, she was filled with anger, and went to her foster-parents, Oceanus and Tethys, in their watery realm. "See," said she, "how I am treated; I who am supposed to be the Queen of the Gods. She whom I forbade to wear human shape has been made a goddess; and my punishment has been turned into an honour. When night has made the world dark, you will see in the sky new stars which are an insult to me. If you have any sympathy for your foster-child, forbid my enemy and her son to rest in your waters."

Her request was granted, and the Great and the Little Bear are condemned to wander around the sky for ever, never coming to rest, as other stars do, in the cool waters of ocean. The Great Bear, or Ursa Major, is the group of stars known also as The Plough, or Charles' Wain, while the Little Bear, or

Ursa Minor, is the group in which the Pole Star is situated. These stars do not rise and set, as the great majority of the heavenly bodies do, but can be seen at night in any part of the circles in which they seem to travel round the pole.

CHAPTER XI: STORIES OF ANIMALS—II

The Dolphin: Adventures of Bacchus and Arion—Bats: Daughters of Minyas—Frogs: Peasants of Lycia—The Newt: Abas—The Spider: Arachne—Origin of the Olive and Horse—Ants: The Myrmidons—Psyche and Cupid

CHAPTER XI

Stories of Animals—II

THE Dolphin is a curious animal of the whale family, which drew the attention of sailors in very early times. It is about six or eight feet long, the thickest part being near the middle. It is a powerful swimmer, and herds of these creatures may often be seen gambolling on the surface of the sea and playing around ships, as though delighting in the company of men. They fling themselves out of the water to such a height, that they have been known to fall on the decks of vessels. There has always been an idea, too, that they are fond of music, and give signs of their delight by their movements, and by following vessels, when they hear it.

They were great favourites with the ocean-gods, and, as we have seen, are represented as playing joyously around the car of Neptune when he journeyed over the waves. With such habits, it is not surprising that we find the story of sailors being turned into dolphins by the power of the god Bacchus.

The crew of a certain ship, who were rough fellows, half pirates, found on the isle of Naxos, where they landed to take in water, a beautiful youth, apparently overcome by wine, so they carried him on board, intending to sell him as a slave. After a while the youth, who was really the god Bacchus, and was only mocking them, pretended to rouse himself, asking how he came there, and what they were going to do with him. One of them told him not to be afraid, but to tell them to what port he wished to be taken, whereupon he asked them to go to Naxos, which they should find would be a very hospitable land for them. Then they swore by all the gods to do as he wished.

The steersman, who had already reproached them for their wickedness, would have steered them back to Naxos, but the rest prevented him, and one of them took the helm himself, to direct their course away from the island. The god, then, pretending to weep, besought them to fulfil their promise, but they mocked him, and with sail and oars hastened on their course. But swift punishment fell upon them; the ship suddenly stood still in the midst of the waters; ivy, thick with leaves and clustering berries twined round the oars and the mast. The god himself stood among them, crowned with clusters of grapes, and brandished a lance covered with vine leaves.

A rapid change came over the treacherous sailors;

they grew black, their limbs shrank into fins, and their hardened skin was covered with scales. One by one they leaped into the sea, and played around the ship, tossing their bodies as if in sport, and blowing the water from their wide nostrils. All except the terrified steersman had been turned into dolphins. But to him the god spoke kindly, and told him to steer for Naxos, where they quickly arrived, and where the steersman became a favoured attendant of Bacchus.

Another story connected with the dolphin is that of Arion, who was a famous singer and played with marvellous skill on the lyre. Travelling in Italy and Sicily he gained great renown, and also wealth, with which he embarked for his native Corinth. But the sailors of the ship, filled with greed, determined to cast him into the sea and take his wealth for themselves. When they told him to prepare for death, he asked as a favour that he might sing one last song, and, glad to hear such a famous musician, they agreed. Standing on the deck, he sang a dirge, accompanying himself on the lyre, and then threw himself overboard.

But he did not perish, for a dolphin, charmed by his music, bore him on his back and carried him to land. Then he went to Corinth, and made known to the King how he had been treated, so when the sailors arrived they were asked what had become of

their passenger. They explained that he had stayed behind at one of the ports at which they had called, when Arion suddenly stood before them. In terror they confessed their guilt, and were punished.

Those curious little creatures, the Bats, were familiar to the Greeks, as they are to us, and were often found taking up their abode in ruined buildings, hiding during the day, and flitting silently forth at night. They also frequented the vines, and were often found hiding in the thick-growing ivy. All these habits, and the squeaky little voices of the bats, are referred to in the following story, to which they perhaps gave rise.

Once a festival was proclaimed in Bœotia in honour of Bacchus, and at the bidding of the priests the women, both mistresses and maids, laid aside their work, bound their hair with garlands, and went forth to join in the song and dance. But the daughters of Minyas, the king, refused to acknowledge the god, or to join in his worship, and went on with their work, with their maidens, carding the wool, or spinning the threads with their fingers, or weaving the cloth; for these were the duties of even the highest ladies in the land.

"While others are idling," said one, "and hastening to these foolish rites, let us, who serve Minerva, go on

Latona and Her Children

W. H. Rinehart

with our useful labours, and lighten our work by telling stories." So they took it in turn to tell stories, until the light faded, and night began to fall. But Bacchus had marked their contempt for his festival, and now visited it with a dreadful punishment, nor did Minerva, though she took delight in useful arts, save the maidens from his wrath. Suddenly, music filled the house, the sound of the tambourine, the pipe, and the horn; while the myrrh and saffron shed around their odour—all these things belonging to the rites of Bacchus.

Then more wonderful things happened; the cloth in the loom grew green, and began to put forth leaves like ivy. Part turned into vines, and what were threads before, now became vine-shoots, while bunches of purple grapes shone amid the foliage. The house shook, and seemed to be filled with glowing torches, while the howlings of invisible beasts were heard.

The sisters, terrified, ran through the smoking house in search of a hiding-place, but suddenly their limbs and bodies grew small, and though they had no feathers, thin transparent wings stretched over their limbs and bore them up. They tried to cry out in their fear, but could only make a tiny squeaking sound, small even in proportion to their little bodies. They were turned into bats, but they still continued

to haunt the houses, and flew abroad by night, being afraid of the light.

Another old story tells how Latona, the mother of Apollo and Diana, wandering with her infant children, trying to escape from the persecutions of Juno, came in her travels to the land of Lycia. The weather was very hot, her children were a heavy burden, she was weary with her long journey, and parched with thirst. As she wandered through a valley, she came to a clear pool, where peasants were gathering osiers and bulrushes.

Thankfully she knelt down by the edge of the pool to quench her thirst, intending to raise the water in her hand, but the hard-hearted peasants drove her away. "Why do you deny me water?" said the goddess. "The use of water is common to all. Nature has made neither sun, nor air, nor the running stream the property of any one." In vain she told them how faint and weary she was, and appealed to them for the sake of her little ones to allow her to drink. The wretches replied only with jeers, and threats of violence if she did not go away. Then, to make it impossible for her to drink, they stirred up the mud at the bottom with their hands and feet, jumping about in the water and mocking her.

Then the anger of the goddess was roused against the hard-hearted barbarians, and lifting up her

hands to heaven she said: "May you live in that pool for ever." The wish of the goddess came to pass. Their backs are united to their heads, their necks seem cut off, their backbone is green, and their bloated bodies white. As they grew smaller, they became more and more ugly. Even yet do they strive to utter abuse, although they are beneath the water. Their voice is now hoarse, and their bloated necks swell out; their very abuse swells their deformed jaws. Now they go beneath the water, and now swim on the surface; often they sit on the bank of the pool, but soon plunge again beneath the cold stream.

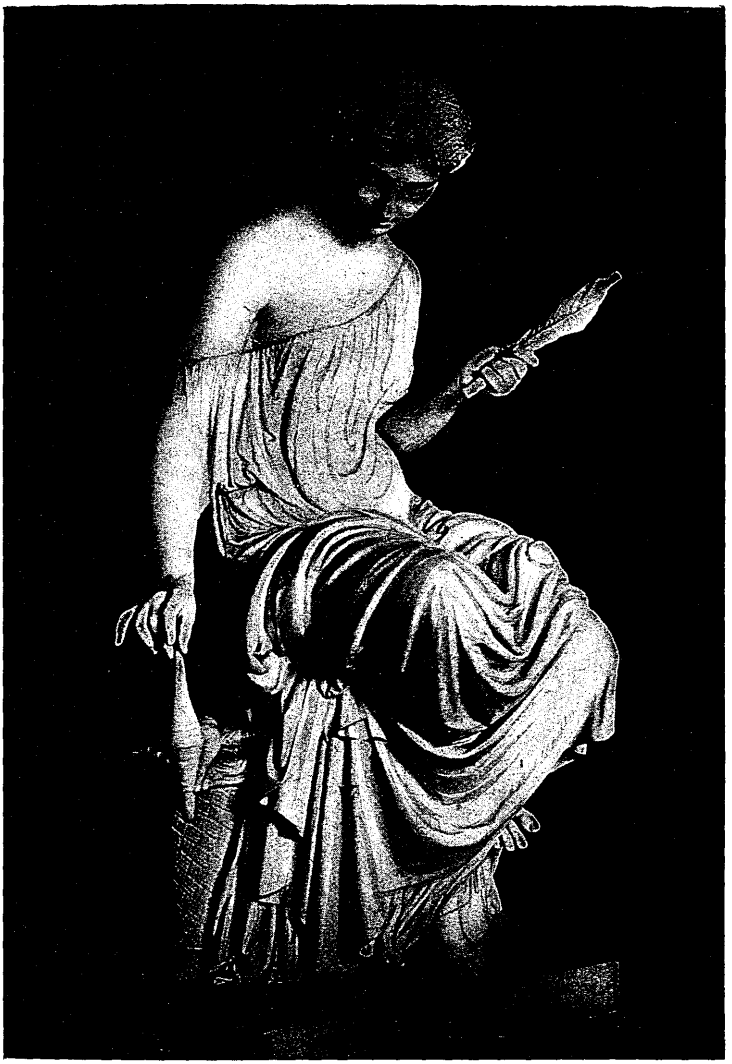
Thus the old poet describes the frog, and accounts for its origin, while that of the Newt is very similar to it. When Ceres was wandering in search of Proserpine, she also, on one occasion, suffered very much from thirst. Coming to a thatched cottage, she knocked at the door, when an old woman came out. The goddess asked for water, but the old woman gave her a sweet drink, which she had made from parched barley, and Ceres, being very thirsty, drank freely.

While she was drinking, Abas, or Stellio, a boy of bold and impudent look, who was standing by, laughed at her, and called her greedy. Offended at the insult, the goddess threw the remainder of the

liquor, with the barley, over the boy, and a sudden change took place in him. His arms became legs, a tail grew from his body, his skin was spotted and stained with the liquor. So that he might not be able to harm others, his size was diminished till he was less than a small lizard. The old woman, astonished, tried to touch the new marvel, but he fled from her, and sought refuge under a stone. One account says that the boy thus punished was the old woman's son, but for the credit of the goddess we will hope that it was not so, for it would have been a poor return for her kindness. Ever since that time, the newt tries to hide himself, in shame.

The story of Arachne arose through the wonderful skill displayed by the spider in making its web. The fineness of its threads surpasses anything that can be made by human spinning, and the web is a wonderfully beautiful and delicate piece of work. In ancient times the spinning and weaving of wool and flax were carried on at home, and this work, with the making of clothes, formed a very important part of the duties of the female part of the household. Even ladies of the highest rank, as we have seen, did not think this work beneath them, but took great pride in turning out fine, even threads, and weaving them into beautiful patterns.

Arachne was a maiden who excelled in these arts,



Arachne
Moreau

and also in embroidery, another favourite occupation. She made such beautiful fabrics, and adorned them with pictures so wonderfully life-like, that even the nymphs would come to watch her at her work. But the praises she was constantly receiving filled her with pride and conceit. When one of her admirers, thinking to pay her a great compliment, said that Minerva must have taught her, she was quite indignant, and said she would not be afraid to challenge even the goddess herself to a trial of skill.

Now Minerva, who, as you know, was one of the greatest of the immortals, was the goddess who presided over the domestic arts, including those in which Arachne was so clever, and was, of course, matchless in wisdom and in skill. She heard the boast, and determined to punish the maiden's pride and impiety, but not without giving her a chance to withdraw her wicked words. She therefore appeared to her, in the form of an old woman, pointed out to her the sin of which she had been guilty, and advised her to ask the forgiveness of the offended goddess.

Arachne, however, scoffed at her words, and repeated the challenge, when Minerva suddenly dropped her disguise, and revealed herself in her true character. All but Arachne were filled with

awe, but the foolish maiden was so confident in her skill that she would not withdraw her words.

The goddess then began to weave, and the coloured threads of the wool were blended into a wonderful set of pictures. In the centre appeared the chief deities of heaven, each to be distinguished by his likeness—Jupiter himself seated in majesty in the midst. In the ancient days both Minerva and Neptune had laid claim to Athens, and it was decided that the city should be given to the one who produced the more valuable gift to mankind. The sea-god struck the earth with his trident, and from the opening thus made there rushed forth the swift and beautiful horse; Minerva struck the ground with her spear, and caused the olive-tree to spring up, with its green berries. It was judged that Minerva had given the better gift, and the city thus won was called after her name of Athene.

The picture now growing under the skilful fingers of the goddess, therefore, showed Neptune with his trident, with the horse springing forth; herself also, with the olive tree, and the gods admiring it. Then, to warn Arachne not to rush upon her fate by persisting in the contest, she pictured, in the four corners, four scenes of mortals who had brought upon themselves punishment by daring to contend with the gods. The wool, dyed in brazen vessels, was so

well chosen that the colours blended into each other perfectly, and no mortal art could equal the work of the goddess.

But Arachne would not be warned, and began to weave in her turn. What made matters worse was that she chose for her subjects such deeds of the gods as had not been to their credit. She excelled herself, however, in the beauty of her work, and even Minerva could find no fault with it. When she pictured Europa carried off by Jupiter, in the form of a bull, across the sea, it looked almost like real water, and a real bull, and so with the rest.

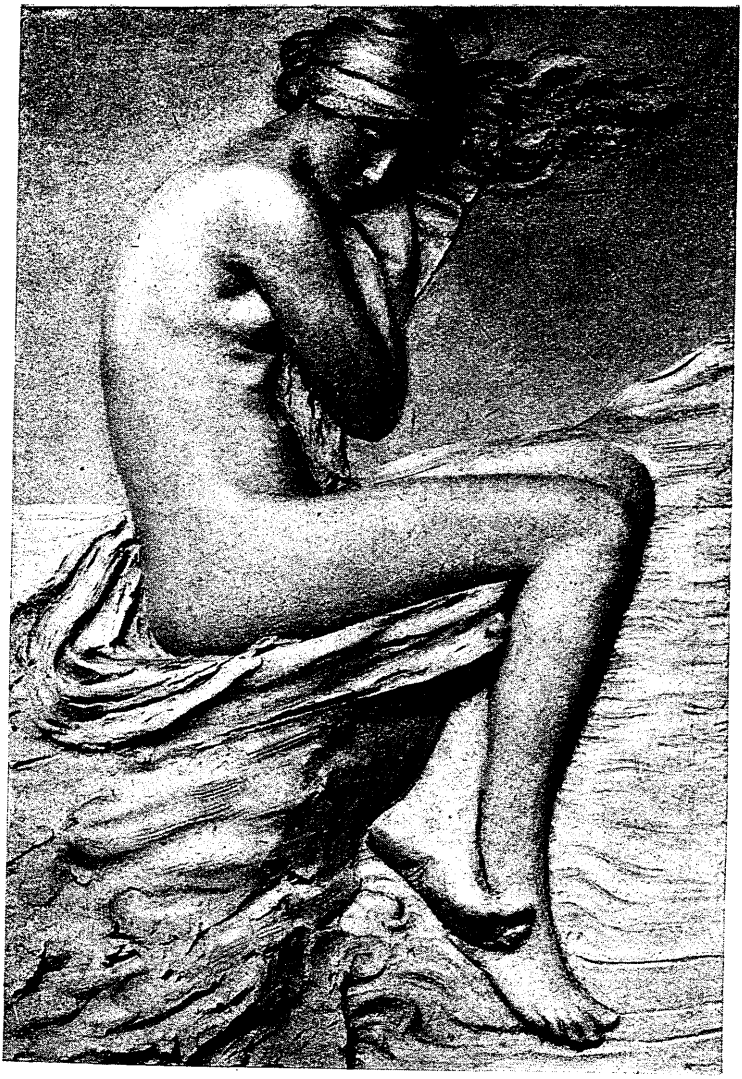
Minerva was so angry at the insult to the gods, and also at the success of the work, that she tore the web, and struck her rival on the forehead with the boxwood shuttle. The high-spirited Arachne could not bear this treatment, and hanged herself with the yarn she had spun. But Minerva bore her up, saying, "Live on, wicked one, but still hang." Then she sprinkled her with the juice of aconite, and condemned her and her descendants for ever to spin and weave in the form of spiders.

The Ants, like the spiders, show marvellous skill. The way in which they work together in ant-cities, building their homes, sharing their work, storing up food, and in other ways providing for the future and caring for their offspring, makes them seem almost

endowed with reason, like human beings. These things roused the wonder and admiration of the ancients, as they do ours, and a story sprang up in which, unlike most of these myths, ants were turned into men.

The island of Ægina fell under the displeasure of Juno, who sent such a dreadful plague upon it that first the cattle, then the country people, and lastly those who lived in the city, sickened and died. Only the king, Æacus, and his son were left. Æacus was the son of Jupiter, and in his despair he called on his father either to restore his people or to let him also die. Close by stood a great oak, sacred to Jove, and on it were crowds of ants busily working. Looking on them, and admiring their numbers and their industry, he besought his father to give him such a band of subjects, to take the place of those he had lost. A rustling sound was heard among the leaves, but nothing else happened.

That night, while he slept, the king dreamed that from this tree ants dropped to the ground in great numbers, grew larger and larger, and at last became men. When he awoke, he heard voices outside the temple in which he had been sleeping, as of a multitude, but thought he must be still dreaming, until his son called him to look at the wonderful sight. There he saw, with amazement, great crowds of people, who came to do homage to him, and hailed him as



Psyche
Harry Bates
By Permission of Mr. Frederick Hollyer

their king. Joyfully he returned thanks to the king of gods and men, and set to work to divide the land among them. From their origin they were called Myrmidons (ant-descended), and we are told that they were an obedient and diligent race, eager for gain, and given to hoarding up their gains. These are just the qualities we should expect from a people produced from ants.

The Butterfly, bursting in all its beauty from the chrysalis in which it seems to lie dead, is a type of the immortality of the soul, and the Greek word *psyche* means both the butterfly and the soul. In a beautiful old Greek story Psyche is also the name of a maiden of surpassing loveliness who, it was foretold, should be the bride of "a monster whom neither gods nor men can resist." From the summit of a mountain she was carried by Zephyrus into a lovely valley, and placed gently down at the entrance of a palace of more than mortal splendour, surrounded by beautiful trees and flowers.

As she entered she was welcomed by sweet voices and music, and for many days lived in this beautiful home, surrounded by every care and attention, though her attendants were all invisible. Here her destined husband visited her, but always during the hours of darkness, and though his words were full of love she caught no glimpse of his form.

Growing weary of the daily solitude, she begged that her two sisters might visit her, and gained a reluctant consent. They too were brought by Zephyrus, but their sister's beautiful home filled them with envy, and at last they persuaded her to betray her husband's trust by looking upon him, to see if he was really the monster that they pictured him to be.

So at night, when he lay asleep, she stole softly to his side with a lamp, and saw a most beautiful youth, for it was Cupid who had chosen her for his bride. But the god awoke, and telling her sadly that love cannot live with suspicion, spread his wings and fled. The palace, too, vanished, and poor Psyche, now full of love for her husband, wandered day and night in search of him.

Advised by Ceres, she besought forgiveness of the goddess of love, the mother of the husband her conduct had driven away. But Venus received her angrily and set her difficult and dangerous tasks to prove her repentance. Cupid, however, who still loved her dearly, gave her secret help, and at last prevailed on Jupiter to intercede with the offended goddess. So Psyche was forgiven, and made immortal, with the promise that she should never again be separated from her beloved Cupid.

CHAPTER XII: STORIES OF BIRDS—I

The Swallow and the Nightingale: Procne and Philomela—The Hawk: Dædalion—The Peacock: Argus—Story of Io—The Partridge: Perdix—Dædalus and the Labyrinth: the Minotaur—The Death of Icarus: Invention of the Saw and Compasses—The Crow and the Raven

CHAPTER XII

Stories of Birds—I

THERE are so many of the old Greek stories which finish up by telling that some of the actors in them were turned into birds, that it seems, in many cases, to be simply a picturesque way of saying that they were lost sight of, or took refuge in flight. Some of them, again, were suggested by the fact that the subject of the story happened to have the same name as that of a bird, or a similar one, and the same applies to some of the stories of animals or plants.

But still others seem to be based on the peculiarities of the birds which figure in them, for such birds as the magpie, the owl, the nightingale, the jackdaw, and so on, differ as much in their habits and character as the animals with which the stories in the previous chapters have dealt. The present chapter will deal with such stories, of which we will first take that of the Swallow and the Nightingale.

The melancholy sweetness of the nightingale's note, all the more striking from the fact of its singing

in the stillness of night, when the songsters of day have returned to their nests, has always had a great attraction for poetic minds. So we are not surprised to find that the Greek poets invented a story based on it; while the same story is connected with two peculiarities of another bird, the swallow—its being songless, and its habit of building under the eaves and window-heads of houses, as though anxious to mix with the inmates.

Pandion, King of Athens, had two daughters, Procne and Philomela. In a war against the city of Thebes, Pandion was assisted by Tereus, King of Thrace (or of Daulis), and in return for this help gave his ally his daughter Procne for his wife. But it was not destined to be a happy marriage for the poor bride. Even at the wedding-feast there were omens of disaster. Hymen, the god of marriage, and the Graces did not give it their blessing, and an owl flew in and perched hooting on the rafters.

Tereus returned home with his bride, but after a few years he tired of her, and shut her up in a tower at some distance from his palace. One account says that Procne, feeling lonely, begged her husband to send for her sister—at any rate Tereus did so, and Philomela came to his court. Then the king, who had guarded, as he thought, against his secret being revealed, by cruelly cutting out his wife's tongue,

told Philomela that her sister was dead, and before long persuaded her to become his queen, in the place of the deeply-wronged Procne.

Shut up within stone walls, carefully guarded, and bereft of speech, Procne had yet one means by which she could make known her wrongs. She was very clever in the art of weaving, so she wove a fabric in which the story was set forth in the form of pictures, and sent it by a faithful old servant to her sister. Philomela understood the terrible truth, and took steps to release her unhappy sister.

According to the older story, the sisters took a horrible revenge by killing Itys, the little son of Procne and Tereus, and serving him up as food to the cruel king, so that the fate which befell them was a punishment for their unnatural crime. But another and pleasanter variation tells us that they took Itys and fled from the palace by night. Tereus, however, was aroused and pursued them, and when, seeing there was no escape, they called upon the gods, Procne was turned into a swallow, and Philomela into a nightingale. Tereus himself was turned into a bird, but accounts differ as to what it was—some say a hawk, which for ever pursues the two sisters.

Procne built her nest under the eaves of the palace, and repeatedly tried to attract the attention of her little son, even flying at times into the rooms of the

dwelling to do so, but the child, of course, could not understand what the bird wanted. Philomela (the nightingale is often spoken of as *Philomel* in poetry), on the other hand, haunts the groves and the fields, singing in plaintive strains the story of the cruelty suffered by herself and her sister.

The following story gives a very different account of the origin of the hawk. Dædalion was the son of Lucifer, the morning star, who summons the car of Phœbus, and is the last of the stars to withdraw from the sky. His brother Ceyx loved to rule in peace, but Dædalion was of a fierce, active nature, and was never so happy as when waging war against other kings, and pursuing his foes.

He had a daughter, who was so beautiful that many suitors sought her in marriage, and even Apollo and Mercury praised her charms. But she grew vain and presumptuous through the praises which were lavished upon her, and dared to boast that her beauty was greater than that of Diana. So the wrath of the goddess was aroused against her, and, with the bitter jest, "Perhaps if my looks do not please her, my deeds will," Diana bent her bow and slew the presumptuous maiden. Then the funeral pile was built, and her body was given to the flames.

Her father was overcome with grief, and would

listen to no words of comfort. He would have rushed into the midst of the pile himself, but the flames drove him back. Then, in madness, he dashed away through the pathless woods until he reached the top of Mount Parnassus, and was about to fling himself from the top of the rock. But Apollo, pitying him, turned him into a bird, and gave him a curved beak and sharp talons. His courage and warlike nature were unchanged, while his strength was greater than the size of his body would account for. So now, as a hawk, he is an enemy to all the other birds, and avenges on them the griefs he himself has been made to suffer.

The curious and beautiful markings on the tail of the Peacock are often called eyes, and according to a famous myth they were once really eyes. The bird was supposed by the Greeks to be the especial favourite of the goddess Juno, just as the dove was the bird of Venus.

Argus was a man who had a hundred eyes spread over his body, and as he never went to sleep, except on the fatal occasion recorded in this story, with more than two at a time, he has become the type of watchfulness which nothing can escape. Jupiter wooed a beautiful maiden named Io, the daughter of the river-god Machus, and to protect her from the jealousy of Juno, turned her into a white cow. Juno,

however, suspected the secret, and asked Jupiter where the beautiful animal had come from. He told her he had just caused it to spring from the earth, so she praised its beauty, and asked for it as a gift. As he could hardly refuse such a simple request without deeply offending the goddess, he unwillingly consented, and poor Io was fastened to an olive tree in the grove of Juno.

To make quite sure she should not be secretly carried off, Juno set Argus to watch over her. The father of Io, mourning over her disappearance, sought his daughter far and wide, and at last came to the place where she was. Io could only make a sad lowing when she tried to speak, but to let her father know the dreadful plight she was in, she scratched on the ground, on a patch of sand, her name IΩ. Then he understood what had happened to her, but Argus drove him away.

Jupiter, however, moved by her grief, determined to get rid of Argus and release Io, and sent his messenger, the god Mercury, to kill the watchful guardian. This was just the kind of errand that Mercury enjoyed, for he delighted in cunning tricks. So he flew down to the earth, and laid aside all signs of his divinity except his wand. He then wandered towards the place where Argus was seated, on the top of a hill, so that he could see in all directions.

Mercury appeared to be a simple shepherd, driving before him a flock of sheep, and playing skilfully on his Pandæan pipes.

Pleased with the music, Argus invited him to come and sit beside him, while the flock wandered in safety on the grassy plain below. This was just what the god wanted, so he sat by Argus all day long, trying by soothing strains of music, and long stories, to send him to sleep. Try as he would, however, some one or more of the hundred eyes still kept watch. At last Argus asked how the instrument Mercury held in his hand came to be invented, and the god told the story of Pan and Syrinx, spinning it out to a great length.

At last every one of the eyes was closed in slumber, when Mercury sprang upon the unfortunate watchman, slew him, and set Io free. Juno, in memory of Argus, took his hundred eyes, and scattered them over the tail of her favourite bird, and there they are to this day as a proof of the truth of the story.

The myth which explains the origin of the partridge seems to be one of those for which a resemblance of names is responsible. Perdix is the name of the partridge, it is also the name of a mythical youth who perished by violence, hence a story springs up in which the latter is turned into the bird which bears his name, though, indeed, the poet who tells the story says that it accounts for one of the habits of the bird.

Dædalus was the famous artificer of Greek mythology, and his skill in building and in working in metals was marvellous. He made, for example, a wonderful labyrinth, or maze, in which it was impossible for a person once entangled to find his way out. This was the haunt of the Minotaur, a monster with a man's body and a bull's head, which fed on human flesh, and which was at last killed by the hero Theseus.

Another famous work of Dædalus was the making of wings, by means of which he and his son Icarus escaped from Crete. The father safely reached Sicily, but the son perished. He was warned not to fly too low, lest the waves should wet his wings and bring him down; nor too high, lest the heat of the sun should melt the wax with which the wings were fastened to his shoulders, but he neglected the warning, and flew so near the sun that the wax softened, his wings came loose, and he fell headlong into what was called, after him, the Icarian Sea.

The sister of Dædalus placed her son Perdix under the care of the cunning artificer, as what we should now call an apprentice, and the youth showed wonderful promise. Walking one day on the seashore, he saw the backbone of a fish lying on the beach, and by imitating its shape in iron he invented the saw. It is said that he was also the first to use compasses for describing circles.

The Minotaur

G. F. Watts

By Permission of Mr. Frederick Hollyer

His cleverness roused the jealousy of his uncle, who feared that his pupil would grow to be more famous than himself. To avoid this danger, he pushed Perdix from the top of a tower they had built, intending that he should be dashed in pieces. But Minerva, who always favoured those who showed skill in the arts, unless, as in the case of Arachne, it made them presumptuous, saved him from death by turning him into the bird which bears his name. Ever since, the partridge, "mindful of its former fall," says the poet, does not raise its body aloft, or make its home in the lofty trees, but takes care to build its nest low on the ground.

That a bird should have black feathers seemed, to the Greeks, to mean that a punishment had fallen upon it, and this was the case both with the Crow and the Raven. The crow was at first a maiden, who had been turned into that form by Minerva, to save her from a pressing danger, and became the favourite of that goddess. But she fell into disgrace, and was banished from Minerva's company, her place being taken by the owl.

The raven, too, was formerly of a silvery hue, with snow-white feathers without spot, like the doves, and was a favourite with Apollo. He was warned by the crow to avoid talking too much, and so escape the fate which had befallen her, but the advice was

unheeded, and he paid the penalty. Apollo dearly loved a nymph named Coronis, and believed himself equally beloved by her. But after a time of happiness, the raven brought him word that the maiden no longer loved him, but had given her affection to a mortal youth. At the news, the laurel wreath fell from the brow of the god, the lyre dropped from his hand, and he turned pale with anger. Then, without waiting to learn how much truth there was in the report, he slew Coronis with one of his fatal arrows.

He soon repented his hasty action, and tried to restore her to life, but all in vain. Then his anger turned against the informer; he turned the beautiful plumage of the raven to a dismal black, and forbade him to perch in future among the white birds.

CHAPTER XIII: STORIES OF BIRDS—II

The Magpies: daughters of Pierus—The Jackdaw: Arne—The Sea-eagle: Nisus—Musical Stones—The Owl: Ascalaphus—Story of the Wren—Proserpine in Hades—The Didapper, or Diver: Æsacus

CHAPTER XIII

Stories of Birds—II

AMONG birds having special qualities which attract attention, the Magpies were not likely to be overlooked. Their boldness, and the constant chattering they keep up, have made their name serve, even to the present day, as a rebuke to forward, talkative people. How they came to have this peculiarity, according to the Greeks, who noticed it ages ago, is told in the following story.

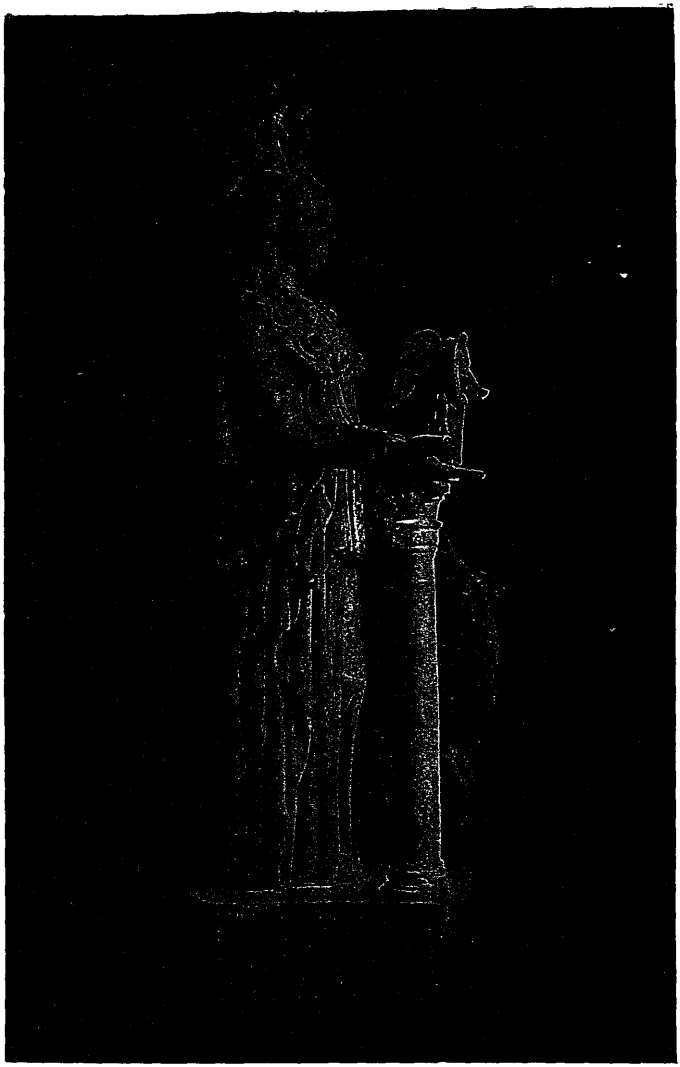
On one occasion, Minerva paid a visit to the nine Muses, goddesses who presided over music and poetry, the arts and sciences, and who dwelt on the summits of Mounts Helicon, Parnassus, and Pindus. Minerva was anxious to see the wonderful spring on Mount Helicon, which had recently been produced by the stroke of the hoof of Pegasus, the winged horse.

As they were welcoming her, and she was saying how happy they were, to live in such a beautiful home, and to be engaged in such delightful occupations, the sound of wings was heard, and voices seemed to come from the lofty trees, also welcoming

her. Minerva looked up, and asked in surprise what the sounds were, saying that it was exactly as if human voices had spoken. One of the Muses pointed to nine birds, which sat on a bough lamenting their fate—they were magpies. Then she went on to tell the story of their origin.

The daughters of Pierus were proud of their skill in song, and also of the fact that they were the same in number as the Muses themselves. But so vain and foolish were they, that they came to the goddesses and challenged them, saying, " Cease imposing on the ignorant with your empty melody. If you have any confidence in your skill, contend with us. We are not to be outdone in voice or skill, and we are as many in number. Then, when we have overcome you, we will take your places."

The Muses were ashamed to contend with them, but would have been still more ashamed to refuse, so they agreed, and the Nymphs chosen to act as judges sat around on the rocks. Then one of the Pierides (daughters of Pierus), the one who had first spoken, sang of the war of the Giants against the Gods, but praised the giants far more than was their due. She sang how the gods fled to Egypt, where flows the Nile with its seven mouths, and how they took refuge under different shapes. Jupiter became a horned bull, Apollo a crow, Diana a cat,



Varvakeion Statuette
Antique copy of the Athena of Phidias
National Museum, Athens

Juno a snow-white cow, Venus a fish, Bacchus a he-goat, and Mercury an ibis.

Then Calliope, one of the Muses, took her harp, and in tones so sweet that the voice of her opponent seemed coarse and tuneless in comparison, sang the story of Pluto and Proserpine, and of the wanderings of Ceres in search of her beloved daughter. When she had finished, the Nymphs at once awarded her the victory, whereupon the defeated sisters began to load the Muses with abuse.

Then the Nymphs told them that since they had not only deserved punishment by daring to compare themselves with the goddesses, the daughters of Jupiter, but had added abuse to their fault, their punishment should quickly follow. The sisters despised the threat, and smiled in derision, but while they were waving their insolent hands, they saw quills growing out of their nails, and their arms covered with feathers.

Their clamouring voices became meaningless, and each could see the faces of the rest growing smaller with their bodies, and shooting out into hard beaks. While they strove to beat their breasts in their dismay, the movement carried them into the air, and they hung poised as magpies, the scandal of the groves. Even then, the poet tells us, their original talkativeness remained in them, and their enormous

love of chattering. In speaking of the birds uttering words of welcome to Minerva, another Greek poet tells us that it was a common thing among the ancients to teach parrots and magpies to do this.

The Jackdaw has a great fondness for bright or sparkling objects, which it often picks up and takes to its nest. When a jackdaw's nest is found it often has bits of glass or of metal lying about it. When they are kept as pets, unless carefully watched, they will carry off even valuable things, such as rings, coins, or small gold and silver nick-nacks. Everyone will remember how the "Jackdaw of Rheims" carried off the Cardinal's ring. This peculiar fancy of the jackdaw gave rise to the idea that it was a covetous bird, fond of hoarding up money, and the Greeks had a story which explained how it came to have such a bad character.

Arne was the daughter of a king whose city was closely besieged by his foes. Time after time their attacks were beaten off, but Arne, filled with the love of gold, stole from the city and sought an interview with their chief, offering to betray the city into their hands for a large sum. The offer was accepted, the act of treachery carried out, and the gold paid over to the unnatural daughter. But while she was gloating over her ill-gotten wealth, the vengeance of the gods fell upon her, and she was changed into

a jackdaw, still retaining, in her new form, the avarice which had been her ruin, and which is still shown in the character of her descendants.

Scylla, the daughter of a king named Nisus, also brought punishment upon herself by betraying her father to his enemy, but, wicked as her conduct was, her motive was not the vile one that moved Arne. Nisus had a purple lock amid his grey hairs, and it had been foretold that so long as this lock was uninjured his city should never be taken. Now Minos, a son of Jupiter, was besieging the city, but, famous warrior though he was, he could make no impression on it.

The high walls, strengthened with towers, resisted all his efforts. It was said that the stones of one of these towers, when struck, gave forth musical notes, and Scylla, in time of peace, had often amused herself by going up this tower and striking the musical stones with a pebble. When the walls were being built, Apollo had helped in the work, and in the meantime laid his harp upon the stones of the tower. So wonderful was this lyre that its music had remained in the stones. We may be sure that this myth arose through the ancients noticing that some stones, when struck, give out a clear, ringing note.

But Scylla, watching the siege from this tower, often saw the leader of the enemy, and his valour

and manly beauty, with the splendour of his appearance, so worked upon her that she fell violently in love with him. Then the idea came to her to try to win his favour by delivering up the city, and although at first she drew back in horror from such a deed, in the end she yielded. In the dead of night, when Nisus was asleep, she cut the fatal lock from his head, and, slipping past the sentinels, made her way to the tent of Minos. Giving him the lock, she begged him to take her back with him to his own country, but Minos refused her gift, and told her that he would not allow such a wretch to come into his land.

The city was then overcome, according to the prophecy, and Minos sailed away. But Scylla, when she saw the fleet departing, flung herself into the sea, and, clutching the stern of the king's vessel, was dragged through the waves. As she was clinging to the ship, her father, who had been changed into a sea-eagle, with tawny wings, darted after her to tear her with his sharp, curved beak. In terror she loosed her hold, but she was instantly turned into a sea-bird, and flew off, with her angry parent in pursuit. So the sea-eagle still makes war upon the other sea-birds, whose only safety is in flight.

The Owl got his bad name through flying by night in search of small birds, mice, and other prey. His vision is very keen in the twilight, or even when it is

almost dark, when he can really fly well, and startles people by his noiseless approach, but in the daytime the light dazzles him, making him seem lazy and stupid. When by chance he does appear in daylight, the smaller birds, who recognise him as their enemy, often attack him, knowing that he is at a disadvantage.

But an old legend found in French folk-lore gives a very different explanation for this. The story goes that the wren flew into the sky to fetch down fire for the rest, and got his feathers burned in doing so. The other birds, to show their gratitude, each gave him a feather to replace those he had lost, all but the owl, who refused on the ground that he needed all his feathers for the coming winter. So he is condemned to stay in hiding all day, and to suffer from cold at night, while the more generous birds will not suffer him to be in their company.

The owl has always been considered a bird of evil omen, to bring bad luck, and even foretell death. For this reason, and because he is the bird of night, it is not surprising that the old Greek story makes the infernal regions his place of origin. While the Muse was relating to Minerva the story of Ceres, as she had sung it in the contest with the daughters of Pierus, she also told the story of the owl.

It will be remembered that Ceres had permission

to bring back her daughter from the realms of Pluto, but only on condition that she had eaten nothing during her stay there. However, when walking in Pluto's garden she had eaten a few seeds from a pomegranate. Unfortunately, Ascalaphus had watched her, and, by telling what he had seen, prevented her rescue. According to one story, Ceres punished him by placing a great rock on him, and when Hercules released him, turned him into an owl.

But the poet Ovid says that the Queen of Erebus (Proserpine) changed him into an accursed bird, and turned his head, sprinkled with the waters of Phlegethon (the burning river of the infernal regions), into a beak, and feathers, and great eyes. "He, thus robbed of his own shape, is clothed with tawny wings, his head becomes larger, his nails bend inwards, and with difficulty can he move the wings that spring through his sluggish arms. He becomes the foreboder of approaching woe, a lazy owl, a direful omen to mortals."

Yet the owl is represented as being the favourite bird of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, taking the place of the crow, as we have seen. He owes this honour to the grave and solemn look of his round face and great staring eyes.

The Didapper, or Diver, a sea-bird which gets its name from the depth to which it dives, and the length

of time it remains under water, was said to be the form into which Æsacus was changed. This prince, seeing a nymph named Hesperie, the daughter of a river-god, sitting by the side of her father's stream, fell in love with her, and pursued her to carry her off. The nymph fled, and in her flight a snake bit her foot, causing her death. Her pursuer, filled with remorse, determined to atone for his fault in bringing her to this sad end by putting an end to his own life, and hurled himself from a high rock into the sea.

But Neptune took pity on him, and as he fell, turned him into a bird. Determined to die, he again dashed himself into the water, but his feathers broke his fall. Henceforth he constantly tried to destroy himself by plunging into the waves. "Love caused his leanness; the spaces between the joints of his legs are long; his neck remains long; and his head is far away from his body." In this fanciful way are the peculiarities of this bird accounted for.

CHAPTER XIV: STORIES OF BIRDS—III

The King-fisher: Halcyone and Ceyx — Doves: Daughters of Anius—The Heron: City of Ardea—Ships of Æneas become Nymphs—Cranes: Gerane —War of Pygmies and Cranes — Hercules and Pygmies—The Stork—The Woodpecker: Picus

CHAPTER XIV

Stories of Birds—III

THE ideas held by the ancients with regard to that beautiful bird the Kingfisher, or Halcyon as it was called, were a curious mixture of fact and fancy. These birds were supposed to be a model of the affection and constancy which should bind husband and wife together, and it was said that the male bird, when it lost its mate, would live a solitary life rather than pair again. It was also supposed that they built their nests on the sea-shore, and that while the female was hatching her young the sea was calm for seven days, though the number is also given at nine, and eleven.

These ideas gave rise to the story of Ceyx and Halcyone, which is told in a very touching manner in an old poem. Ceyx, the king of a district in Thessaly, was the son of Phosphor, or Lucifer, the Morning Star, and his wife Halcyone was the daughter of Æolus, the wind-god. (The winds and the stars were very closely connected in ancient ideas, both belonging to the sky.) They were devoted to each

other, and could not bear the idea of separation. But misfortune fell upon the family and the country of Ceyx, and he realised that he had fallen under the displeasure of the gods. You will remember the fate of his brother, who was changed into a hawk.

One account says that Ceyx and Halcyone called each other "Jove" and "Hera," and that the anger of Jove at this presumption was the cause of their woes. At any rate, Ceyx determined to consult an oracle, to learn what he should do to be restored to favour, and for this purpose he was obliged to take a long sea-voyage. His wife, who, as a daughter of Æolus, knew only too well the dangers of the sea, had a feeling that he would never return, and begged him not to go, but he would not yield to her entreaties, nor would he allow her to share with him the dangers of the voyage.

Soothing her fears as best he could, he set sail, and Halcyone stood upon the shore waving her hand to him so long as she could distinguish his form. Then, full of forebodings, she threw herself down on the shore and wept. Her fears were only too well founded, for before they had gone far a terrific storm burst. Amid terrifying gloom, broken only by the flash of the lightning, the ship was tossed helplessly on the waves. The mast broke, the sailors

were terrified and helpless, and at last the bark was overwhelmed.

Ceyx, full of grief for his beloved wife, prayed, as he sank beneath the waves, that his body might be borne by them to his native strand and the feet of Halcyone, who he knew would be watching for him. In the meantime Halcyone was constantly beseeching the gods to bring back her husband in safety, and Juno, grieving to hear her appeals on behalf of one who was already dead, sent Iris to command the god of sleep to send a vision to reveal the truth to the unhappy wife.

Iris at once put on her robes of a thousand colours, and, placing her curving arch in the heavens, sped down to the court of Sleep with the message. Then Morpheus, who is so called because he can assume any shape (*morphē*, in Greek, means shape), took the form of Ceyx, and appeared to Halcyone in a dream during the night, telling her his fate. At dawn the queen rushed down to the shore, and saw tossing on the waves a body, which, as it came near, she recognised as that of her husband.

In despair she flung herself into the sea, but the gods, pitying their sad fate, turned them both into birds. So they still lived, as Kingfishers, and their love was as strong as ever. And now, for seven calm days, in the winter-time, does Halcyon brood upon

her nest, floating on the winter sea. Æolus keeps the waters calm, and prevents the winds from rushing forth, lest they should destroy his descendants, and these days are called the Halcyon days.

Doves are looked upon as gentle, affectionate birds, fond of human society, easily frightened by rough treatment, but easily won by kindness, and, as we should expect, the maidens who, in the following story, were changed into doves, had a very amiable character. Anius was a king who was also a prophet of Apollo, and a great favourite of that god, who gave to his son the gift of prophecy. To his four beautiful and gentle daughters Bacchus gave a very extraordinary gift, the power of turning whatever they wished into corn, and wine, and olives, considered by the Greeks the necessaries of life.

This gift was often a source of joy to the people of Anius, but it brought disaster to the maidens themselves. For Agamemnon, when he was sailing with his followers to attack Troy, came to the island, and demanded that they should supply his fleet with provisions. But Anius was friendly to the people of Troy, and his daughters could not bear the thought of being forced to help their enemies. So they fled, but the Greek leader learned where they had taken refuge, and followed them with his fleet, threatening

to make war upon their protectors if they were not at once given up to him.

The people of the islands to which they had fled, far too weak to be able to defy such a great force, had no choice but to yield, and the maidens were sent on board the king's ship. But while chains were being brought, with which to bind them, they lifted up their arms and called on Bacchus for aid. The god heard their prayer, and delivered them by changing them into snow-white doves.

To the Heron is given a very curious origin, which, though it pretends to explain the form and voice of the bird, is probably due to the word Ardea, which was the name of the heron, being also the name of the city mentioned in the story. It is said, too, that herons were really plentiful in the neighbourhood where the bird is supposed to have arisen.

When Æneas, the Trojan hero, came to Italy to make a new home for the remnant of his people, he was opposed by a king named Turnus, whose chief city was Ardea. Turnus set fire to the ships of Æneas, but the goddess Cybele, remembering that the pines of which they were built had been cut from her favourite mount, Ida, would not allow them to be destroyed. So she came in her chariot, drawn by lions, and, helped by the sons of Astræus (the Winds), broke the cables, carried the burning

ships out to sea, and quenched them beneath the waves.

Then the wood softened and became flesh, the keel became a backbone, the oars became fingers and swimming feet, the cordage became soft hair—in short, the ships were changed into Sea-Nymphs. They now sport in the waters which once they dreaded, but, remembering their origin, they often give a helping hand to the tempest-tossed ships, unless they happen to be manned by Greeks, the race to which Troy owed its ruin.

In the battle which followed, Turnus was slain, and the Trojans set fire to the city of Ardea. When it was consumed, a bird—the heron—then known for the first time, arose from the embers, and beat the ashes with its flapping wings. The new bird is thus described: "The voice, the leanness, the paleness, and everything that befits a captured city, and the very name of the city, remain in that bird; and Ardea itself is bewailed by the beating of its wings." And indeed, the heron, like others of its class, is not a festive-looking bird.

The Cranes migrated each year from Europe to Africa, and a strange story arose in connection with them. It was said that they flew to the lands far away at the sources of the Nile, and that there war was carried on every year between them and a race

of tiny people called Pygmies who lived there. Possibly monkeys gave rise to the idea of these pygmies, though a race of dwarfs has actually been discovered in Africa by Stanley. (Pliny says that the pygmies go down to the sea each year, and eat the eggs and young of the cranes. He, however, places them in India).

When the cranes arrived, they attacked the cornfields of the pygmies, and they in turn attacked the cranes. We are told that Gerane, or Pygas, was once Queen of the Pygmies, who worshipped her as a goddess. This raised her to such a pitch of pride that she despised the worship of the gods. Jupiter and Diana, as a punishment, turned her into a crane, and put enmity between her and her people, so that the cranes were from that time the great enemies of the tiny people who had shared in the fault of their queen. The weapon of the cranes was their long sharp beak, which they use in fighting, and also in killing the reptiles on which they feed.

Another story tells us that Hercules, in one of his expeditions, came into the land of the pygmies, in Africa. They prepared to attack the hero, but he laughed at them, and, taking up some of them, put them in a fold of his robe and carried them off.

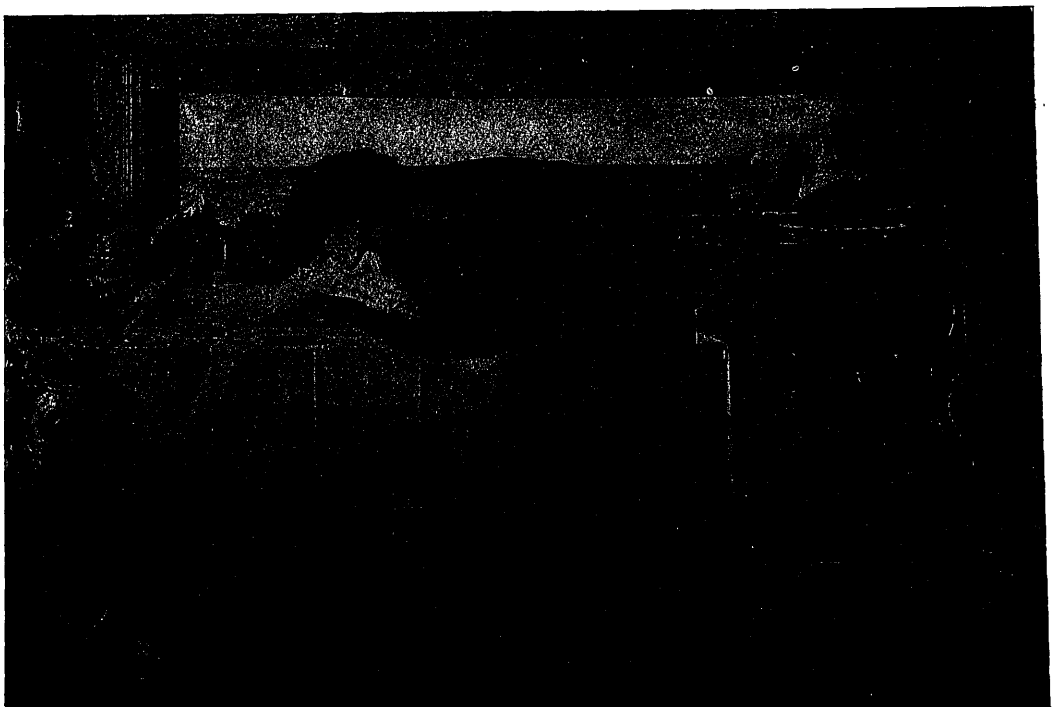
The Stork is another princess in disguise, though there does not seem to be much in the bird itself to

account for the story. Antigone, daughter of a king of Troy, was remarkable for the extreme beauty of her hair, and was so proud of it that she used to compare herself to Juno. The goddess, to punish her presumption, turned her hair into snakes, but the other gods, in pity, changed her into a stork.

The Woodpecker is supposed to tap the bark of trees with its beak, in order to discover, from the sound, whether there are hollows beneath, in which insects are hid. But the following story gives a very different reason for the tapping, and explains how the bird came into existence. In this case, as in some others, the fact that Picus is the name of the bird and also of the hero of the story probably gave rise to the myth.

Picus, a son of Saturn, was a young king who loved a maiden equally famed for her beauty and her voice, which was so sweet that her singing often tamed the wild beasts; while the birds in their flight, and even the rivers in their courses, would pause to hear her, as they did to listen to Orpheus, the son of Apollo. Hence she was called Canens—the singer.

While Picus was hunting one day, the witch Circe saw him, as she was gathering plants with which to make magic liquors. She at once fell in love with



Circe
Sir E. Burne-Jones

him, and determined that he should be her husband. Taking on the form of a wild boar, for her magic arts made this an easy task for her, she rushed past the king, who at once urged on his horse in pursuit. So swift was the chase that Picus became quite separated from his companions, and then Circe returned again to her own shape, and told him why she had lured him away.

For all her beauty, and though she was the daughter of the Sun, he refused to have anything to do with her, telling her that his affections were fixed on Canens, and would always remain so. In vain she urged him, and then, her love turning to rage, she repeated dreadful charms over him. He fled, and, wondering that his flight was so swift, he suddenly saw that he was turned into a bird. In his anger he struck the wild oaks with his hard beak, and inflicted wounds on the branches.

His wings took the purple colour of his robe, the golden buckle which had fastened his garment became feathers, and encompassed his neck with the colour of yellow gold. His attendants, meeting Circe, demanded to know what she had done with their king, and were about to attack her, but, touching them with her wand, she turned them into wild beasts. His beloved Canens, when he failed to appear, sought him far and wide, and when con-

vinced that he had perished, pined away until at last she vanished.

But the descendants of Picus, to this day, when they think of the cruel fate of their ancestor, vent their anger in hard blows with their sharp beaks upon the bark of the trees.

CHAPTER XV: STORIES OF TREES

The Laurel: Daphne—The Cypress: Cyparissus—The Wild Olive—The Pine-tree: Attis—The Mulberry: Pyramus and Thisbe

CHAPTER XV

Stories of Trees

SOON after Apollo had slain the huge and deadly python with his fatal arrows, he saw one day the little god Cupid playing with his bow. So he spoke scornfully to the boy, saying: "What have you to do, foolish boy, with gallant arms? Leave those things to me, who am able to give deadly wounds to the fierce wild beasts, and to my enemies, and do not seek praise for skill which properly belongs to me." "Your bow may shoot all things, Phœbus," replied the youthful god, "but mine shall shoot you; and as you are more glorious game than wild beasts, so is my glory greater than yours."

There was a nymph named Daphne, the daughter of the river-god Peneus, a maiden so beautiful that many youths loved her and sought her hand. But she cared for none of them, for her whole delight was in the joys of the chase. When her father told her she ought to accept one of her lovers, she begged that she might be allowed always to remain single, and to

give herself up to hunting, as Diana did. Her father promised that she should have her wish, but still she might have changed her mind in time, had it not been for Cupid.

This god determined to be revenged on Apollo for his scornful words, by making him fall in love without his love being returned. So he took from his quiver two arrows of very different kinds. One was of a brilliant colour, tipped with gold, and sharp pointed; one of the arrows with which he made love to spring up in the breast of either god or mortal. The other was dull in colour, tipped with lead, and quite blunt; its power was such that any one struck by it became incapable of feeling love.

With this he struck Daphne, who had never cared about the matter before, but who now hated the very idea of a lover. But with the golden-tipped weapon he pierced the breast of Apollo, when Daphne, not far away, was following the chase. At once he was seized with violent love for the nymph, who indeed was beautiful enough to please even a god, and longed to make her his bride.

Coming towards her, he began to tell her of his love, but she fled at her utmost speed. Apollo followed, but she would not stop, in spite of all his appeals. She could not escape from the god, however, and when her strength was failing, she called on her

Apollo and Daphne
Henrietta Rae

father to save her, or on the earth to swallow her up, rather than she should become the bride of Apollo.

Hardly had she spoken when she lost the power to run, she began to be enclosed in bark, and to take root in the ground. Her arms became branches, her hair leaves, and she was changed into a laurel tree. Apollo embraced the tree, and mourned for his lost love. "Since thou canst not be my wife," said he, "at least thou shalt be my tree, and I will adorn with thee my head, my lyre, and my quiver."

He promised, too, that as he had the gift of eternal youth, so she should be ever green, and that victors should be crowned with laurel wreaths, and bear branches of laurel, instead of the beech, which had hitherto been used. Not only Apollo himself, and victors in war, but those who excelled in poetry and music, arts under the special protection of the god, were crowned with laurel, which is still used in the same way in pictures and sculpture.

The Cypress-tree, with its sombre appearance, has for ages been associated with mourning, and planted near the graves of the departed; and that is probably how the story arose of Cyparissus, another mortal whom the favour of Apollo could not save from disaster.

It will be remembered that Æsculapius, the son of Apollo, was slain by Jupiter when his brother,

Pluto, complained that the wise physician restored the dead to life. Apollo could not, of course, take revenge on the King of the Gods, but he vented his anger on the Cyclops, who, as the workmen of Vulcan, had forged the fatal thunder-bolt. For this act Apollo was condemned to serve for nine years as a shepherd, under Admetus, king of Thessaly. It was during this time that he formed a friendship with a youth named Cyparissus, and also with Hyacinthus, of whom we shall hear again. These youths often accompanied Apollo in his sports, and in hunting.

Now there was a large stag, which was a great favourite of Apollo, and was sacred to the Nymphs. His horns were adorned with gold, a necklace of gems hung round his smooth neck, and he bore other ornaments placed upon him by his admirers, for he was so tame and fearless that he went about among the people, and allowed himself to be patted even by strangers. Cyparissus was especially fond of him, and would often decorate him with wreaths of flowers, and even ride on his back.

But one unlucky day, when Cyparissus was hunting, by a sad mischance he pierced this stag with a sharp javelin, and when he saw the poor animal dying from the wound, he determined to put an end to his own life. Apollo tried to calm him, and soften his grief, but the youth would not be consoled, and as a last

favour asked the gods that he might mourn for ever. So he was turned into a cypress, and Apollo lamented his fate, saying: "Thou shalt be mourned by me, and shalt mourn for others; thou shalt ever attend upon those who are sorrowing for the dead."

The olive tree, as we have seen, was the special gift of the goddess Minerva, and was highly prized by the Greeks, as it is now by many other nations, but the wild olive, with its bitter berries, unfit for food, had a very different origin. In a part of Calabria, a mountainous region of Italy, there was a cave overshadowed by trees, with a smooth stream flowing by. This was one of the abodes of Pan, but long before then it had been a favourite haunt of the nymphs, who often sported on the smooth green sward in front of it.

But one day a rough shepherd found the spot, and scared away the gentle nymphs. At first they fled in terror, but recovering from their fright, they treated him with contempt, and went on their way moving in graceful dance, as when he had interrupted them. But the shepherd followed them, mocking their movements with rude capers, and became more and more abusive.

Swift punishment, however, fell upon him, for he suddenly found himself fixed to the spot. Growing bark closed his throat, and his insulting speech failed

him. His body was enclosed in the trunk of a tree, and soon he had entirely disappeared. "From this tree and its sap," says the poet, "you may understand what were his manners. For the wild olive, by its bitter berries, shows the vileness of his tongue; the coarseness of his words passed into them."

The Pine-tree was also, according to the ancients, once a human being named Attis, who was changed into that form, but the accounts differ very much as to the details. According to one, Attis, or Athis, was a young shepherd with whom a king's daughter fell in love, and who was condemned to be put to death, but was saved by being changed into a tree. In another account he was thus changed by magic arts, because he would not forsake the maiden to whom he was plighted, just as Picus was turned into a woodpecker.

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe explains how the Mulberry, "which bore white fruit formerly, now bears it of purple hue, from the contact of blood." The scene is laid in the city of Babylon, built by Semiramis, and one of the most famous of eastern cities. Its walls are said to have been 87 feet thick, 350 feet high, and 60 miles in circuit. In this city, in two houses built side by side, lived Pyramus, a handsome youth, and Thisbe, the most beautiful maiden in the East. They were deeply in love

with each other, but their parents forbade their union, though they could not destroy their affection.

But in the wall which separated the two houses the lovers discovered a chink, which no one else had noticed. Through this they would often converse with each other, and breathe vows of constancy. One day they agreed that, when night came, they would steal out unnoticed, and meet at the tomb of Ninus (the first king of Babylon), some distance from the city. There, close by a clear spring, stood a lofty mulberry tree, full of snow-white fruit, and this was to be their meeting-place.

Thisbe, deceiving her attendants, slipped away when night fell, and, reaching the appointed spot, sat down under the tree, though she trembled at the dangers of the night. But as she waited, a lioness, with its jaws all smeared with the blood of an ox it had just slain, came to drink at the spring. The maiden, seeing the dreadful beast coming, sprang up and fled for refuge into a cave not far away, leaving behind her veil, which had fallen off as she ran. The lioness, as she returned from the spring, saw the veil, and, tearing it with her blood-stained jaws, left it lying there all red with blood.

Pyramus, coming up a little later, saw the foot-prints of the beast, and, pale with fear for Thisbe's

safety, hastened forward to the meeting-place, where he found, as he thought, the evidence of her cruel death. As his tears fell on the well-remembered garment he blamed himself as the cause of her death, for not having been there first, ready to protect her, and called on the wild beasts to devour him also. Then, drawing his sword, he plunged it into his own breast, determined not to outlive his beloved Thisbe. His blood, taken up by the roots of the mulberry-tree, turned the fruit to a dark purple hue, which it ever afterwards retained.

Presently, Thisbe, recovering somewhat from her fright, stole back to the trysting-place, eager to tell her lover of the dreadful danger she had escaped, though at first uncertain whether it was the same spot, so different did the tree look with its now dark fruit. But when she saw the body of her dying lover, she flung herself down by him, and called in anguish to him to speak to her, and tell her what had happened.

But Pyramus, casting one look on her beloved features, closed his eyes in death. Then the unhappy maiden, seeing her own veil, and her lover's ivory sheath without its sword, realised what had happened, and, taking up the weapon, prayed that she and her dead lover should be buried in the same tomb, and that the mulberry might always bear fruit black,

The Fates
Michael Angelo 194
Anderson, Photo.

suitable for mourning, as a memorial of the blood of two faithful but ill-fated lovers. Then, placing the point of the sword to her bosom, she fell upon it, and thus Pyramus and Thisbe shared the same fate, faithful to each other unto death.

CHAPTER XVI: STORIES OF FLOWERS AND PLANTS

The Hyacinth: Hyacinthus—Death of Ajax—The Sunflower: Clytie—Frankincense Plant: Leucothoë —Myrrh: Myrrha—Death of Adonis: the Anemone —Poisonous Plants: Aconite

CHAPTER XVI

Stories of Flowers and Plants

THE flower known to the old Greeks as the Hyacinth was not the one we know by that name, but a purple flower, perhaps some variety of pansy, iris, or larkspur. It bore on its petals certain dark marks somewhat like the letters AI, AI, which make the Greek word corresponding to the English *Alas!*—the exclamation of grief. Such a strange thing, of course, needed an explanation, and so the flower became connected with the story of the death of Hyacinthus.

Apollo, as we have seen in the case of Cyparissus, sometimes formed friendships with mortal youths, and Hyacinthus was so favoured, though in his case also it ended in disaster and death. Apollo often shared the sports of Hyacinthus, and would accompany him when hunting, helping him and bringing him success—carrying his fishing-nets for example, and putting his dogs on the track of the quarry, quite laying aside his dignity as a god.

A favourite game with the Greeks was that of

throwing the discus, a flat, round plate of brass, iron, stone, or wood, about ten or twelve inches across, akin to the modern quoit. A famous Greek statue of which we sometimes see copies is called the Discobolus, or disc-thrower. Sometimes a heavy iron ball was used, with a hole through the centre for a rope or thong which was held while throwing it. Even the noblest princes would strive to win applause by throwing the discus further than their opponents.

Apollo and Hyacinthus went out one day to practise this sport, and Apollo made a huge cast. His companion, eager to take his turn, ran forward to seize the discus the moment it was thrown, but it rebounded from the ground, and struck him on the forehead. The blow was fatal; he fell to the earth, and when the god hurried forward and picked him up, his head fell upon his shoulder like a flower of which the stem has been broken.

The god did all he could to restore his unfortunate friend to life, but in vain, and he blamed himself in his grief as the cause of his death. Then he mourned over him, wishing that he could have died for him, or with him; and declared that, since that could not be, Hyacinthus should become a flower, which should bear his name, and which Apollo would honour in song. More than that, the flower should bear on its leaves the marks of the god's own grief, as a tribute

to his dead friend. Apollo prophesied, too, that the time would come when a famous hero should add his name to the flower, and it should be read upon the same leaves.

Even while he spoke, the blood which stained the grass disappeared, and in its stead arose a flower of a hue more beautiful than the Tyrian purple, on whose petals the god inscribed the mournful words "AI, AI." It is said that the disc was turned from its course by Boreas (or by Zephyrus), who was jealous of the great love between the two friends, and in this fatal manner vented his evil feeling. This, of course, is the poetical way of saying that the disc was turned aside by the wind, which, if it were blowing strongly, might very well happen, from the shape of the missile.

In later times they celebrated in Greece, in memory of this event, a festival called the Hyacinthia, early in May, and many suppose that Hyacinth really represents the tender verdure of spring, killed by the heat of summer—Apollo, of course, being the Sun-god.

The prophecy of Apollo as to another name being connected with the flower was fulfilled in this way. At the end of the Trojan war the famous hero Achilles was slain by the cowardly Paris, whose sin had caused the war. Paris, assisted by Apollo, discharged an

arrow which pierced the hero in the heel, the only part in which he was capable of being wounded, and this caused his death.

After the body of Achilles had been burned with great pomp, his armour, the most wonderful in the world, having been made for him by the god Vulcan at the request of Thetis, was to be given to the hero who was most worthy of such a prize. Agamemnon, the head of the Greek forces, wisely refused to take the responsibility of deciding in such a delicate matter, and called the chiefs together to decide it by vote. Two of the chiefs, Ulysses and Ajax the son of Telamon, laid claim to the prize, and no one else cared to dispute the claim.

Ulysses was a great warrior, but his claim rested chiefly on his cunning in warfare, for his wily stratagems had often been of the greatest service during the war. Ajax, on the other hand, could lay no claim to wisdom or cunning, but he was a huge man, of terrible strength, and, so far as prowess in battle was concerned, no one could compare with him now that Achilles was no more. Each of the two rivals made a speech before the assembly, in which he described his own exploits, and made light of those of the other, and at the close the chiefs decided that the coveted arms should go to Ulysses.

The wrath of Ajax was fearful; he who had so

Clytie

Lord Leighton 202

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often alone withstood Hector, and hosts of foes, and the fierce flames, and even Jove himself, was now conquered by his own grief. Seizing his sword, he exclaimed, "This at least is my own; or will Ulysses claim this, too, for himself? None but Ajax himself shall conquer Ajax." Then he plunged the sword into his own breast, and fell dead before those who had so often witnessed his valour.

From the green turf, made red by his blood, there sprang up immediately a purple flower, the same which had once sprung from the blood of Hyacinthus. But this time the letters AI belonged to the name of the dead hero. (The Greek form of Ajax is *Aias.*) The anger of Ajax was even carried beyond the grave, for Homer makes Ulysses say, in his account of his visit to the infernal regions, that all the shades of the Greek heroes came to welcome him, except that of Ajax, which would not come near him.

Clytie was a maiden who was loved by Apollo, whom she loved passionately in return. But the fickle god grew cold, and wooed Leucothoë in her place. Thereupon Clytie, filled with jealousy, told the father of her rival that she was secretly receiving visits from a lover. He was so angry that he ordered his daughter to be buried alive, and thus she perished. The Sun-god tried with his rays to restore her to life, but without avail, whereupon he said, "Still thou

shalt reach the skies," and turned her into the Frankincense plant, the gum of which is burnt in the sacrifices of the gods, and so its perfume reaches heaven.

But this did not bring back to Clytie her lover, and she pined in vain for him. Forsaking the company of the other nymphs, she lay with dishevelled hair upon the bare ground, refusing to take food or to be comforted. For nine days this went on, and while the Sun travelled across the sky she fixed her gaze on him, to move the pity of the god. But it was all in vain, and it seemed as though she was about to die.

But instead of that, she was turned into a Sunflower, partly pale and partly red, and very like a violet, which still turns its face to follow the sun. It is clear that the sunflower of this story cannot be the large yellow flower we know under that name —possibly it may be a kind of heliotrope, the name of which indicates a turning towards the sun. Some of the old naturalists said that the sunflower killed the frankincense plant when they grew close together, and it may have been this idea which gave rise to the story of Leucothoë.

Adonis was a beautiful youth whose mother, Myrrha, was changed into the tree which bears her name, as a punishment for a dreadful crime, of which the bitterness of the myrrh is a memorial. He was

devoted to hunting, and spent his days in following any animal, however fierce, whose tracks he found. He was without fear, but Venus, who loved him, begged him not to hunt savage beasts, but only those which fled from the hunter.

He made light of her warnings, but one day, when he was following a wild-boar, and had wounded it with his spear, the savage animal turned upon him, and gored him in the side with its sharp tusk, so that he died. When the goddess saw him lying, bathed in his own blood, she mourned bitterly over him, and said that, as the goddess Proserpine had changed a nymph into the mint plant, giving it fragrance in place of the beauty of the nymph, so Adonis should be turned into a flower.

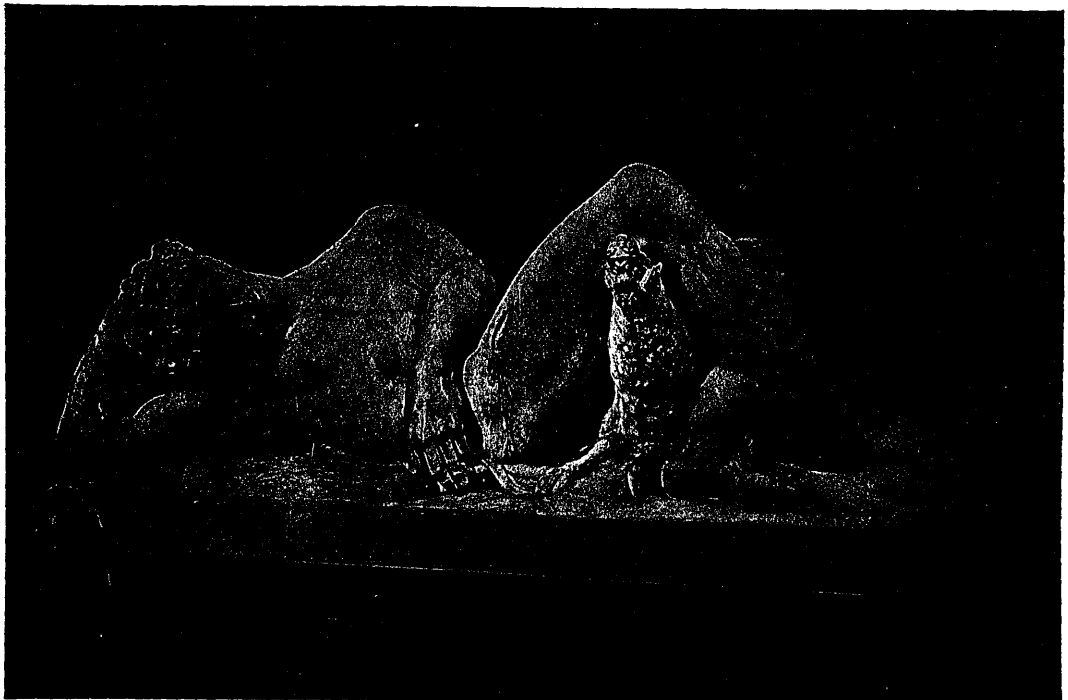
Then she sprinkled nectar over him, and when an hour had passed a flower had sprung from his blood, of the same colour with it. But like Adonis, it is short-lived, for it has a very slender stem, and the wind, from which it takes its name, soon beats it down. This flower is the Anemone, or wind-flower, the Greek word *anemos* meaning wind.

In Thessaly Aconite and other poisonous plants were remarkably common, and the ancients explained this in a story connected with the greatest of all the heroes, Hercules. The great deeds of Hercules, who was the son of Jupiter and Alcmena, form a wonderful

series of stories, some of which have been already referred to. While he was yet a youth, two female forms, Pleasure and Duty, met him, each offering gifts. The "Choice of Hercules" was the gifts offered by Duty, and henceforth, though his life was not free from crimes, he used his wonderful powers chiefly in overcoming evil beasts and evil men. His favourite weapons were an enormous club and his sharp arrows, for he was a wonderful archer.

Having slain his children in a fit of madness sent upon him by Juno, he was condemned, as a penance, to obey the commands of his kinsman Eurystheus. This king sent him on twelve desperate adventures which are called the "Labours of Hercules," and though some seemed impossible, he carried them all out successfully.

The entrance to the realm of Pluto, the abode of the dead, was a wide gate, guarded by a serpent-tailed dog, Cerberus, which had three heads, and kept constant watch. He was friendly to the spirits which entered, but would permit none to return. The last of the twelve labours laid upon Hercules was to fetch this dog to Mycenæ, the city of Eurystheus. No living mortal was permitted, except by the special favour of the gods, even to enter the Land of Shades, so Hercules secured the help of Mercury and Minerva, who went with him.



Dying Adonis

Michael Angelo

He first went to Pluto, who gave him permission to carry Cerberus off, provided he could do it without using weapons. The monster raged and struggled most furiously, and none but a demi-god would have dared to offer violence to him, but Hercules seized him, bound him, and forced him to accompany his captor to Eurystheus, after which the hero took him back to the nether world.

When Hercules brought Cerberus out from the gloomy cavern which formed the entrance to the infernal regions, into the light of the sun, the monster could not bear the brightness, but turned away his heads, and, struggling more violently than ever, filled the air with his frightful howlings. The white foam from his deadly jaws was sprinkled upon the earth, and, becoming solid, sprang up in the form of poisonous plants. Wolf's-bane sprang up plentifully, which, because it grows on the hard rock, the natives called aconite (from a word meaning a whetstone).

CHAPTER XVII: STORIES OF VOLCANIC REGIONS

Typhon—Typhœus and Etna—Alarm of Pluto—Hot Springs—Attack of Rome by the Sabines—Sulphurous Springs—Extinct Volcanoes—Travellers' Tales of Hot Springs—Petrifying Springs

CHAPTER XVII

Stories of Volcanic Regions

WE have already seen that the tremendous forces of nature with which the ancients were familiar, such as those which manifest themselves in the storm, the earthquake, or the flood, gave rise to many imaginary beings, and to wonderful tales of their exploits.

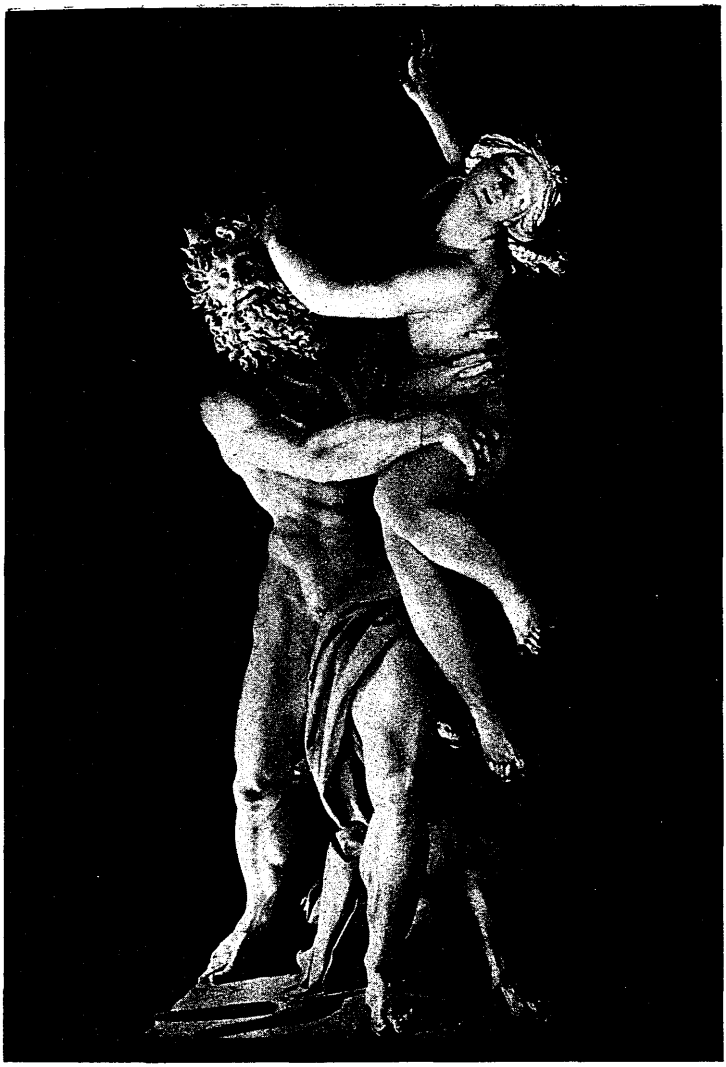
The most terrible monster fashioned by the imagination of the old Greeks to represent the mysterious and awful powers of the subterranean fires was Typhon, the most dreadful of the Titans, the sons of Gæa, the Earth. From the neck of this frightful being sprang a hundred dragon-heads, with destructive breath and eyes flashing fire. Black tongues were thrust from their mouths, while they filled the air with the roaring of lions, the bellowing of bulls, the barking of dogs, the hissing of serpents, howls and screams, and all the terrifying noises of nature.

As the forces of which Typhon is the type seem to try to destroy the established order of the world,

the monster is represented as warring against Jove. But as order is triumphant over chaos, the bolts of Jupiter overcame even this foe, and Typhon was driven into Tartarus, the lowest abyss beneath the earth, to join his brother Titans there. Yet he still tries to rebel, and sometimes ventures to the very confines of the underworld, thrusting forth a fiery tongue from the mouth of a volcano. When the deadly sirocco threatens men and vegetation equally with destruction, it is the fiery breath of Typhon which is felt, as he longs, yet dreads, to come forth and again do battle with the king of Gods and Men. In later times, Typhon was supposed to be the same being as Typhœus.

Sicily is an island specially remarkable for its rugged mountains, and the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions to which it is subject, and we naturally find it figuring largely in the old myths.

Its connection with Vulcan has been already noticed, but its unquiet nature further gave rise to the legend of Typhœus, who, like all the race of Giants, was an enemy to the gods. This giant aspired to scale the heavens and overthrow the gods, but after a desperate struggle he was worsted. To keep him from further attempts, the huge mass of Sicily was heaped upon him, so we can form some idea of his enormous size. The ancients even specified the



Pluto and Proserpina
Ludovisi Museum

various capes which marked the position of his feet, and so on.

He lies on his back, and the vast mass of Etna is piled on his head. As he casts forth sand and flame from his raging mouth, the eruptions of the volcano are caused. He often struggles to free himself, and to roll from his body the mountains and cities which cover it, while the earth trembles with his writhings. Even Pluto is afraid at times, lest the ground should open, and the daylight be let in to affright the trembling shades.

On one occasion Typhœus struggled so violently that the King of Shades drove out in his chariot, drawn by black horses, to survey the foundations of the Sicilian land, in fear lest they should be giving way. However, he found that every part was secure, and that he need not fear for the safety of his infernal realm.

Just as he was about to return to his palace, he was seen by Venus, who persuaded her mischievous little son, Cupid, to pierce his breast with an arrow. Then it was that he was filled with love for Proserpine, and carried her off to share his iron throne. This excursion of Pluto evidently owes its origin to a specially severe earthquake, such as not long ago wrought such ruin in and around Messina.

Among the many signs of volcanic energy with which the ancients were familiar were hot springs, in which the water is heated by the rocks with which it comes in contact. It sometimes happens that, through some underground change, such as the opening of fresh passages among the rocks, a spring which has hitherto been cold will suddenly become hot, or *vice versa.* There are in many places, too, deep cracks in the earth's crust, in which may sometimes be seen the pale blue flames of burning sulphur, for that mineral is very common in connection with volcanoes.

Hence we can understand how the account of an attack upon Rome became adorned by supernatural details. In the early history of that famous city a sudden attack was made by night, by the Sabines, but was evidently beaten back. It would seem, from the story, that some traitor in the city, in league with the Sabines, had opened one of the gates. However, the story is as follows.

The gates had been shut and barred, and the citizens, not thinking of danger, were sleeping peacefully, when the Sabines came silently to surprise them. Juno herself, in her enmity to the Romans, opened the gate, without making a sound as the hinges turned. But Venus saw what was done, and though a god is not permitted to undo what another god has

done, she determined to protect the descendants of her son Æneas.

The Naiads occupied a spot near by, where there was a spring which rivalled the coldness of the waters of the Alps. To them Venus flew, imploring aid for her favourite people. So they made the waters of the fountain gush forth in great abundance, but placed sulphur, with its faint blue light, beneath it, and applied fire to the hollow channels which fed it. So the water rushed out, boiling and foaming, and the posts of the gate itself steamed with the hot spray. Thus the gate was made impassable, and the Sabines were checked until the Romans, aroused by the rush of the water, had time to arm themselves to repel the enemy. To show their gratitude to the goddess for her timely aid, a temple was built and consecrated to "Venus, the Looker-out."

Another result of volcanic action is the formation of great quantities of sulphurous and other gases, some of which are very offensive in smell. These may even taint the springs, making them quite unfit to drink. We have in England occasional springs of sulphurous water, which taste and smell horribly, though they are drunk for their medicinal properties.

Anigros, in Arcadia, was a stream which had, probably from such a cause, a very unpleasant smell.

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Anigros, in Arcadia, was a stream which had, probably from such a cause, a very unpleasant smell.

But the old Greeks gave a very different explanation of its origin. When Hercules had killed the Hydra, he dipped the points of his arrows into its blood, which was such a deadly poison that the wounds they inflicted in future, even if slight in themselves, were nearly always fatal, the victim dying in great agony. On one occasion a warrior on an expedition had received a slight scratch from one of them, and the wound could not be healed, but the smell from it was so dreadful that the unfortunate man was left behind by his companions.

One of the Centaurs, having been wounded with another of these fatal weapons, washed the wound in the waters of the Anigros, which ever afterwards were unfit to drink.

The ancients recognised, from their shape, especially from the crater or hollow at the top, that certain mountains had been volcanoes at some time, but were now extinct. Hence we find the following passage. "Nor will Etna, which burns with its sulphureous furnaces, always be a fiery mountain; nor yet was it always fiery. For, if the earth is an animal, and is alive, and has lungs that breathe forth flames in many a place, it may change the passages for its breathing, and oft as it is moved, may close these caverns and open others. Or, if the light winds are shut up in its lowermost caverns, and strike rocks

against rocks, and matter that contains the elements of flame, and it takes fire at the shock, when the winds are once calmed, the caverns will become cool. Or, if the bituminous qualities take fire, or yellow sulphur is being dried up with smouldering smoke, still, when the earth shall no longer give food and oily fuel to the flame, its energies being exhausted in length of time, and when food shall be wanting to its devouring nature, it will not be able to endure hunger, and will desert its flames."

The existence of hot springs gave rise to some curious "travellers' tales." Thus it was said that there was a grove in Africa, sacred to the god Ammon, in which was a spring known as "the water of the Sun." At daybreak it was lukewarm, at midday, when the heat of the air was intense, its waters were ice-cold. As evening approached they grew warmer; at midnight it boiled and bubbled, and then as morning again approached its heat went off.

Another spring, in a grove at Dodona, sacred to Jupiter, must have been hotter still, for we are told that when the waning moon had shrunk to its smallest orb, wood brought in contact with the stream was set on fire!

Petrifying streams, such as are met with in Derbyshire for example, as in other limestone districts, were also known to the ancients, who ascribed their

action, of course, to supernatural powers. Thus, we learn that the Ciconians had a river, which, when drunk, turned the body into stone, and also laid a covering of marble over things touched by it. They believed, too, that many rivers had very marvellous effects on the bodies and minds of those who drank or bathed in their waters.

On a level plain near Trœzen there was a hill, which was probably of volcanic origin, and which roused the curiosity of the Greeks by its peculiar shape. It was, we are told, a high hill, bare of trees, just like a huge swelling of the ground, and tradition said it had once been level with the surrounding plain. As it was said that warm waters also burst from the earth, we may assume that the hill was due to the same hidden fires. But the poet tells us that the raging power of the winds, pent up in dark caverns, desired to find some vent, and had long struggled in vain to enjoy a freer air.

As there was no opening to their prison, and their blasts were not able to make one, they swelled out the level earth "just as the breath of the mouth is wont to inflate a bladder, or the hide stripped from the two-horned goat" (that is, a wineskin). The swelling remained on the spot, and still preserves the appearance of a high hill, having grown hard in course of time. The winds were, of course, supposed

to be conscious beings; the Greeks did not understand that if there was no opening to the cavern, there could be no "raging blasts."

There was another curious story of a spring in a volcanic region, which was evidently at times charged with noxious matters. The ancients said that at certain periods the water, which they called "the water of Styx," was fatal to men and animals, broke vessels in which it was placed, and had the power of melting all metals. One writer says it was harmful if drunk at night, but not if taken during the day-time.

CHAPTER XVIII: THE GORGON'S HEAD, AND STORIES OF STONES

Perseus and Medusa—Atlas turned into a Mountain —Origin of Snakes in Africa—Rescue of Andromeda —Origin of Coral—Curiously shaped Rocks: Lychas and Others turned into Rocks—Origin of Hailstones —The Touchstone: Battus

CHAPTER XVIII

The Gorgon's Head, and Stories of Stones

THE story of Medusa, the Gorgon who was slain by Perseus, seems to have made a great impression on the minds of the ancients, for it turns up in connection with a number of curious facts in nature.

The birth of Perseus was as remarkable as the wonderful deeds he performed when he grew up. It had been foretold to king Acrisius that his daughter Danaë, a lovely maiden, should have a son who should cause the death of his grandfather. So Acrisius, to make sure that nobody should carry his daughter away as his bride, shut her up in a chamber underground, hoping to avoid the fulfilment of the prophecy.

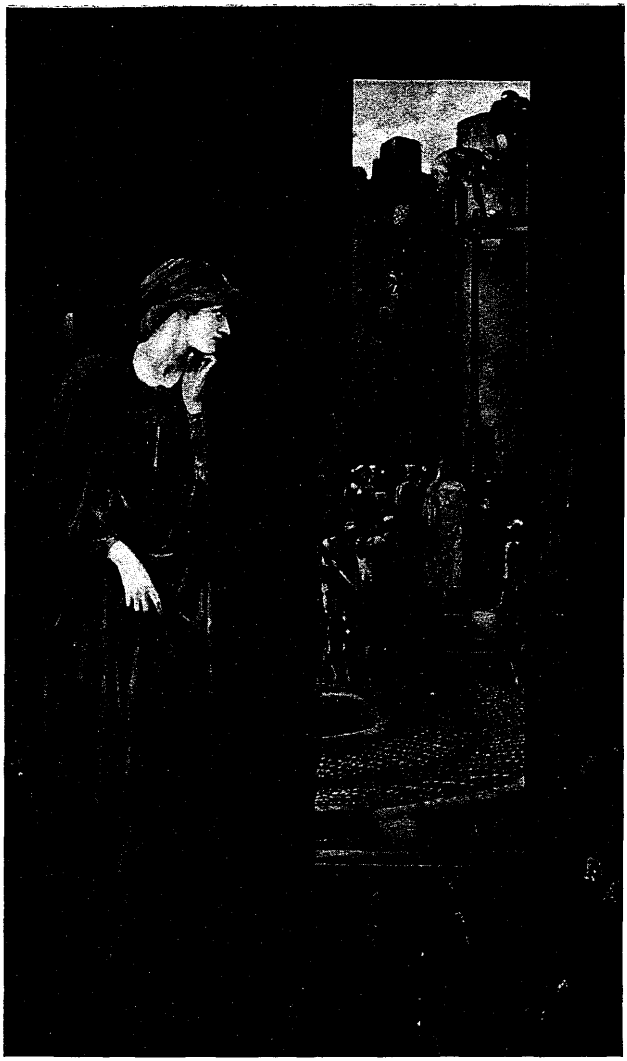
But Jupiter changed himself into a shower of gold, which made its way through the ground and so entered her chamber. Then he assumed his proper form and took the beautiful maiden for his own bride.

Their son was Perseus, and the king, his grandfather, determined that both Danaë and her infant should perish. So he placed them in a large chest and set them afloat upon the sea, feeling sure that the waves would overwhelm them.

But the wind and the currents carried them to the isle of Seriphos, where they were rescued by a kind old fisherman, who, with his wife, adopted them and treated them with great kindness. It was Polydectes, the king of this island, who got Perseus to promise to go in search of the Gorgon, hoping thus to get rid of the youth, whom he feared for his strength and courage. This wicked king treated Danaë with cruelty while Perseus was away, and, very justly, fell a victim to the terrible head when the hero returned in triumph.

Some years afterwards Perseus joined in a festival at which his grandfather was present, and took part in the games of the young men, so as to win the applause of his grandfather, who had never seen him since his infancy. Then he intended to make himself known, and seek the old king's love. But the wind carried a quoit thrown by Perseus, and sent it crashing on to the foot of Acrisius. The shock killed the feeble old man, and so the oracle was fulfilled.

It is said that Danaë represents the earth, which is loved by the heaven, and made rich and fruitful



Danaë and the Tower of Brass
Sir E. Burne-Jones
By Permission of Mr. Frederick Hollyer

by the showers which descend upon it, just as the King of Heaven sought and wooed Danaë under the form of the shower of gold.

Perseus excelled all the sons of men in strength and courage. When he grew to be a young man, he was sent by Minerva to kill Medusa. Long before, Medusa had been a beautiful maiden whose hair was her greatest beauty, but as she dared to compare her beauty to that of Minerva, the goddess changed her hair into hissing snakes.

So frightful was her appearance, and the dreadful look of despair on her face, that the horror of it turned any one who looked upon her into stone. Round her cave dwelling were the stony figures of what had once been men and animals. She took up her abode far in the west, with her two sisters, and there Perseus went to overcome her. Minerva inspired him with superhuman strength and courage, while Mercury lent him his winged sandals, which carried him swiftly through the air, and his sword Harpé, made of a single diamond, with which there was never need to strike a second blow.

He also obtained from Hades the cap of darkness, which rendered the wearer invisible to human eyes, and after long journeyings and great difficulty, found the monster's abode. He dared not look upon her, but as she lay sleeping he flew down,

looking all the while at her reflection in a bright shield which Minerva had lent him, and cut off her head with one stroke. Then, taking the head, he flew through the air, pursued for some distance by her shrieking sisters, who smelt the blood, though they could not see their enemy.

On his way back, he came to Atlas, the god who upheld the heavens on his shoulders, and as Atlas refused the hospitality he asked, and drove him away, he suddenly uncovered the Gorgon's head and turned him to stone. Thus Mount Atlas came into being. Some say, however, that the god, weary of his burden, himself asked Perseus to work this change in him.

As Perseus was flying back, over the Libyan desert, the blood which dropped from the head fell into the sand, and brought forth deadly snakes, and that is why the region ever afterwards swarmed with these reptiles.

When he arrived at Æthiopia, he saw the lovely Andromeda, the daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopea, chained to a rock on the shore. When he asked the cause, the maiden told him that her mother had offended the sea-nymphs by boasting that she was more beautiful than they. So they had sent a dreadful sea-monster to ravage the coast, and the fishermen could no longer obtain food from the sea.

Perseus and Andromeda

Lord Leighton

By Permission of the Museum & Art Gallery Committee of the Leicester Corporation

An oracle had said that only by the sacrifice of her daughter could the curse be removed, so there she was, awaiting death when the monster should arrive.

On condition that she should be his bride if he delivered her, Perseus fought the monster when it came wallowing, a huge mass, over the sea, and slew it, leaving it as a great black rock in the water. When the conflict was over, he laid the Gorgon's head down on the shore, while he washed away the bloodstains of the fight, laying it on a bed of sea-weed, with which he also covered it, to preserve it from injury.

When he took up the head, he found that the poison of the Gorgon's blood had soaked into the sea plants, and had turned them into stone. The sea-nymphs saw the change, and were filled with admiration. So they tried the effect of the head on many other plants, with the same result, and cast seed from these plants into the sea. Thus was explained the origin of coral, which is often so plant-like in shape that the ancients thought it must somehow have grown as a plant. So the old writer concludes his account by saying: "Even now the same nature remains in the coral, that it receives hardness from contact with the air; and what was a plant in the sea, out of the sea becomes stone."

The king and queen joyfully led their daughter

and her brave rescuer to their palace, and a wedding feast was prepared for them. But while Perseus was telling them and the assembled guests the story of his adventures, a great tumult was heard, and in rushed, with a great number of armed followers, Phineus, to whom Andromeda had been betrothed. He angrily claimed his promised bride, but Cepheus reminded him that he had left the maiden to perish, while Perseus, having rescued her, had the greater right.

But Phineus would not listen, and hurled his spear at Perseus, missing him. Then began a terrible slaughter, Perseus and his few friends fighting like heroes. But when the demigod found himself almost alone, with two hundred foes still facing him, he called out a warning to his friends not to look, and uncovered the fatal Head. As his enemies caught sight of it, in whatever attitude they happened to be, they became stone statues, and so the great fight ended. So Perseus claimed his bride, and took her away with him to his own land. The sword and sandals he returned to Mercury, while the Gorgon's head was placed by Minerva on her shield.

There are many other stories of human beings and animals being turned into rocks, probably because rocks sometimes occur which resemble living beings in shape. There are rocks in our own country which,

Perseus
Canova

when seen in certain aspects, have quite a striking likeness to living forms.

One such story tells how, when Hercules dragged Cerberus from the Infernal Regions to the upper world, a certain man hid in a cave, and on peeping out he saw the monster. So great was his terror that he was immediately turned into a rock, which, one writer assures us, was still to be seen in his time.

Two rocks in the river Ida—and running water especially often wears rocks into curious shapes—were once Olenus and his beautiful wife, the latter of whom boasted that her beauty was equal to that of the goddesses. When she was about to be punished, her husband offered to suffer in her stead, but they were both turned into stones, and are still united in death.

In the case of Lychas, whom Hercules swung round three or four times, and then hurled through the air with greater force than if sent from an engine of war, the poet tells us that he was bereft of blood through fear, and having no moisture left in him he was turned into a stone, just as the showers freeze in the cold wind, and the snow thus produced, revolving as it descends, becomes hard and forms hailstones. Hailstones, however, as we now know, are not formed from snow. Lychas, thus changed into stone, fell into the Eubœan Sea, and still projects above the

water, bearing his human form. Many rocks may be seen along rugged coasts, which might easily be imagined to bear the shape of living beings.

The Touchstone is a peculiar kind of iron ore which has the property of attracting iron, and may be used to reveal the presence of that metal. It is thus a kind of " tell-tale," and the old name for it was also used to mean a spy. On one occasion Mercury stole some oxen belonging to Apollo. An old man named Battus saw the theft, so Mercury gave him a cow to secure his silence. " May that stone first make mention of thy theft," said the old man, gratefully.

But Mercury, to test him, soon returned in a different form, and offered him a bull and a cow to tell what had become of the cattle. Battus, thus tempted, revealed the secret, when Mercury assumed his previous shape, and saying, " Dost thou, treacherous man, betray me to myself ? " turned him into the stone which is even yet called " Index " (that is, both *touchstone and spy*).

CHAPTER XIX: STORIES OF THE HEROES—I

The Twelve Labours of Hercules—Bellerophon and the Chimæra—The Calydonian Hunt—Cadmus and the Dragon—The Harvest of the Dragon's Teeth—The Necklace of Harmonia—Cadmus and his Wife turned into Serpents

CHAPTER XIX

Stories of the Heroes—I

THE great deeds of the Heroes, the descendants of the Gods, have been frequently referred to in the course of this book, and, in conclusion, mention will be made of a few others of their chief exploits, so far as they relate to adventures with monsters. The Labours of Hercules, who represents the benefactor of mankind, fighting against the evils that oppress them, are so often mentioned in literature that it may be well to give the complete list of them. The circumstances which led to his undertaking them have been already related.

Hercules was first ordered to slay a monstrous lion, which had wrought great havoc in the valleys of Nemea, and to bring its skin to Eurystheus at Mycenæ. The hero fought this beast with his club and with his arrows, but it was proof against these. Then he seized the monster with his hands and strangled it, thus gaining the victory. The skin he brought to Mycenæ, and for the future wore it, with the head and claws still attached, as a robe.

The second labour was the destruction of the Hydra, a water-snake which dwelt among the swamps and fens of Lerna. As he cut off each of its nine heads, two new ones grew, until, with the help of a companion, he stopped this by burning the stumps. The middle head being immortal, he buried it under a huge rock. In the third adventure he slew a huge boar that was ruining the country round Mount Erymanthus.

In the fourth he captured and brought to the king a wonderful stag, which had golden horns and hoofs of brass, and which had slain all who had dared to hunt it. The Stymphalian birds were immense birds of prey, which, with their sharp beaks and talons, and the power they had of shooting from their wings feathers as sharp as arrows, were very deadly to the people near Lake Stymphalis, and to their cattle. These monsters Hercules overcame as his fifth labour. Minerva helped him by giving him a huge pair of brazen clappers which she had asked Vulcan to make. With these he roused the birds in a great flock, and slew many of them with his arrows, while the rest flew away never to return.

The sixth task was to cleanse the stables in which Augeas, king of Elis, kept three thousand cattle, and which had not been cleared out for many years. The work was to be done in one day, and was accom-

plished by turning the currents of two rivers, Alpheus and Peneus, into the stables by digging a channel for them.

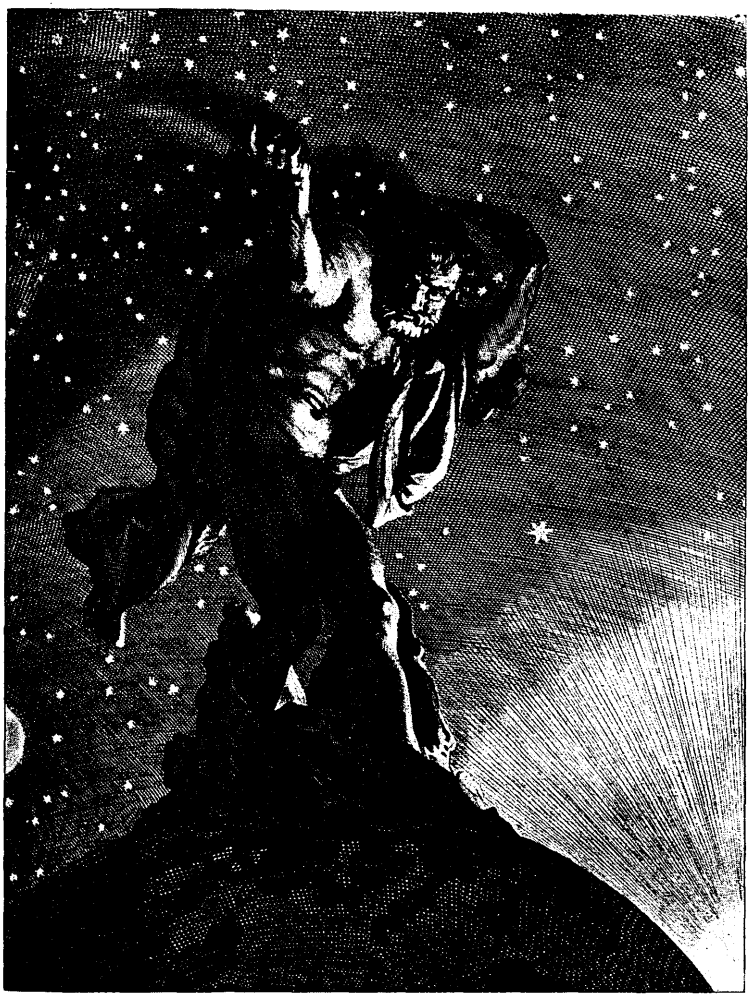
To Minos, king of Crete, Neptune had given a bull of supernatural size and beauty, to provide a sacrifice, but Minos so admired it that he kept it, sacrificing one of his own instead. As a punishment, the god made the animal go mad, and it raged through the island doing great damage. As his seventh labour Hercules not only captured this bull, but made it carry him on its back across the sea, on his way home. Eurystheus set it at liberty, but it became as fierce as ever, and was a great pest until Theseus killed it.

The eighth labour was to fetch the mares of Diomedes, a Thracian king, ferocious creatures which were fed by their master on human flesh, any strangers who came to his country being sacrificed in this way. Hercules, however, gave the tyrant himself as food to the beasts, when they became quite tame in the hero's hand. On his way back to his ship, the people attacked him, to avenge the death of their king, but Hercules routed them with great slaughter. When he returned to the horses, which he had left in charge of a companion, he found that they had devoured his friend, and to honour his memory Hercules built a city, naming it after him, Abderus.

As his ninth exploit, Hercules had to fetch the girdle of Hippolyta, which Eurystheus wished to give to his daughter. Hippolyta was Queen of the Amazons, a race of women-warriors who dwelt on the shores of the Black Sea, renowned for their strength and courage. The godlike hero made such an impression on the queen that she promised to give him the girdle, but Juno was displeased that he should succeed so easily. Taking the form of an Amazon, she roused them to attack the strangers, saying that they were about to rob them of their queen. A battle followed, in which some accounts say that Hippolyta was slain, but the girdle was won.

In the tenth task, the king hoped to get rid of his rival for ever, for he sent him to a distant island to fetch a herd of wonderful oxen belonging to Geryon, a giant with three bodies joined together, and therefore with three heads and three pairs of arms and legs. The oxen were also guarded by a herdsman, another giant, and a two-headed dog, the offspring of Typhon. But Hercules slew first the dog, then the herdsman, and lastly Geryon himself, afterwards carrying off the herd.

The eleventh labour was to bring to Eurystheus the golden apples of the Hesperides, the four daughters of Hesperus, who guarded them with the help of a hundred-headed dragon. After many adventures



Atlas

B. Picart

and long journeyings he came to the god Atlas, and bore the burden of the heavens while the god secured for him three of the golden apples. These he brought back to Eurystheus, who gave them to him, but the hero placed them on the altar of Minerva, who restored them to their guardians. One of the adventures during this journey was a visit to Proteus, whom he compelled, by holding him firmly in spite of all the terrifying forms into which he changed himself, to tell him the way he must travel.

The last of the twelve labours, that of bringing Cerberus from the Underworld, has been already related.

From the blood of the Gorgon sprang two wonderful winged horses unmatched in spirit and in speed, which no one could tame without divine help. One of these, Pegasus, was mastered by a young hero named Bellerophon. In Lycia there was a frightful monster called the Chimæra, the fore part of which was a compound of lion and goat, while the hind part was that of a dragon. Like other dragons, it breathed out flames, and went about the land dealing death and destruction.

While the monster was thus ravaging Lycia, Bellerophon arrived as a visitor to the court, and at the king's request undertook to do battle with the Chimæra. Now the king had no idea that the youth

might succeed, but he wished to oblige king Prœtus, who had sent Bellerophon with a request that he should be got rid of. However, acting on the advice of a soothsayer, the hero passed the night in the temple of Minerva, who had caught the horse Pegasus, tamed him, and presented him to the Muses.

During the night, the goddess brought and gave to Bellerophon a golden bridle, and in the morning showed him the wonderful steed drinking at a spring. The hero walked up to it, and Pegasus, seeing the bridle, came quietly up to him and allowed him to put it on. Then, mounting the steed, the youth rose quickly into the air, flew along until he saw the monster he sought, and quickly slew it.

Many other great deeds were performed with the help of Pegasus, until the king, now realising the worth of his guest, gave him his daughter in marriage and made him his heir. But Bellerophon grew proud and self-confident, and by his presumption aroused the anger of heaven. When at last he attempted to fly to heaven on the back of the winged steed, Jove sent a gadfly to sting Pegasus, and the rider was thrown off. Lame and blind for the rest of his life, the unhappy hero at last died miserably.

Æneus, king of Calydon, and Althea his queen, had a son named Meleager, of whom the fates had said that his life should last no longer than a brand which

was burning on the hearth at the time of his birth. Althea seized the brand, quenched it, and hid it away in the palace, and the child in time grew up to be a brave and handsome young man. Then it happened that his father aroused the anger of Diana by neglecting her worship, and the goddess sent a huge and supernatural boar to lay waste his land, and no one was able to kill the monster.

So the heroes of Greece, Theseus, Jason, Peleus, and many others, were invited to join in a great hunt to slay the boar. Among the hunters was Atalanta, a beautiful maiden, graceful and skilled with the bow, and full of courage and zeal in hunting, so that Meleager loved her from the moment he saw her. The boar lay concealed among the reeds by the side of a stream in a wood, but rushed out when he heard the clamour of the hunters and their dogs.

The dogs had no chance against such a foe; in his fierce rush he gashed them as he passed, and left one after another dying on the ground. More than one of the hunters, too, were wounded or slain by his terrible tusks. At last Atalanta pierced his side with an arrow, though the wound was slight. Then Meleager drove his tough spear deep into the monster's side, and he rolled over dying.

The heroes crowded round to praise their friend, but Meleager gave the dreadful head and rough skin

to Atalanta, saying that as she had given the first wound she was entitled to the spoils of the chase. Some of the others, however, hated to see the honours go to a girl, and a quarrel arose in which Meleager killed the two brothers of his mother. When the news reached her, she was filled with anger, and after a struggle between her love for her son and her desire to avenge the death of her brothers, she brought forth the quenched brand and cast it into the fire.

As it burnt away, Meleager felt dreadful pains shooting through his frame, and very soon died in agony, while his mother put an end to her own life. Such was the sad ending of the Calydonian Hunt.

Cadmus was a young prince who, directed by Apollo, settled in a strange country and built the city of Thebes. Arriving at the spot where he was to build, he wished to offer a sacrifice to Minerva, and sent his followers to get water. So they entered a grove from which a stream ran, to find the spring from which it came. Within the grove, however, there was a cave in which lurked a huge dragon, whose scales glittered like gold. A crest stood on his head, his open jaws showed three rows of teeth, and a triple tongue, while he was swollen with venom.

As the men stooped for water, the monster darted out, killed some with his fangs, others with his poisonous and fiery breath, while others were crushed

in his scaly folds, so that not one escaped. Presently Cadmus himself came to see why they lingered, and saw the dead bodies of his men, and the serpent dripping with their blood. Not knowing that the monster was sacred to Mars, he attacked it furiously. First he flung a huge stone, but though it reached its mark it seemed to have no effect. Then he attacked it with his spear, and at last managed to strike the point through its open jaws and pin the dragon to the trunk of a tree just behind its head.

The voice of Minerva, who, though unseen, had been helping her favourite, now bade him take the teeth of the dragon and sow them in the earth. Scarcely had he done this when through the surface there appeared the points of spears, followed by plumes and helmets. As these rose, the heads, shoulders and arms of warriors showed themselves, and in a very short time a harvest of fully-armed warriors had sprung from the dragon's teeth. One of them warned Cadmus not to interfere, and a fierce fight began, from which at length only five men remained alive. With their help he built the city of Thebes, as he had been commanded.

After a penance of eight years Cadmus was forgiven by the warlike god, but misfortune and violence never left his race. Afterwards he married Harmonia, daughter of Mars and Venus, and their wedding was

honoured with the presence and gifts of the gods and goddesses of Olympus. The present of Vulcan to Harmonia was a brilliant necklace he had made himself, but though of marvellous beauty, it always seemed to bring evil, after Harmonia's death, to its possessor.

Cadmus and his wife suffered many griefs, and one day in his old age, the king, thinking of the death of the dragon, and the troubles which had followed it, said: "If a serpent's life is so dear to the gods, I would I were a serpent." Hardly had he spoken when he was changed into that form, and Harmonia, seeing this, prayed that she might share the same fate. Her prayer was answered, and the two serpents, gentle and friendly to all human beings, never shunned the company of men, nor was anyone ever afraid of them.

CHAPTER XX: STORIES OF THE HEROES—II

Œdipus and the Sphinx—The Sirens: Hidden Dangers of the Shore—Ulysses and the Sirens—The Argonauts and the Sirens—Ulysses and Polyphemus

CHAPTER XX

Stories of the Heroes—II

LAÏUS, king of Thebes, a descendant of Cadmus, having been warned by an oracle at the birth of his son, that if he grew up he would be a danger to his throne and life, gave the infant to one of his herdsmen, with orders to destroy him. But the man, not liking the task, pierced the child's feet, intending to leave him to perish, and then gave him to a fellow herdsman, who took him to Corinth, where he was adopted by the King and Queen, and called Œdipus, or Swollen-foot.

When he grew up, he learned from an oracle that he was destined to be the cause of his father's death, and, to avoid such a calamity, he left Corinth, thinking he was the son of the king. Driving along a narrow road in his chariot, he met another chariot in which was Laïus, with an attendant. A quarrel arose as to which should give way, and Œdipus slew both Laïus and his servant, and thus the oracle was fulfilled without any suspicion of the truth.

Then, led by fate, he made his way to Thebes,

which was soon afterwards in great trouble. For a dreadful monster, the Sphinx, with the body of a lion but the upper part of a woman, haunted the roads leading to the city. She stopped all travellers, asking each to solve a riddle, and promising a safe passage if they could give the answer, but until Œdipus went out to try to overcome her none had succeeded, and all had been slain by the monster.

But Œdipus, undismayed, boldly faced the Sphinx, who asked him: "What animal is it which in the morning goes on four feet, at noon on two, and in the evening on three?" "Man," replied the youth, "who in childhood creeps on all-fours, in manhood walks erect, and in the evening of life supports his steps with a staff." Then the Sphinx, mortified at her riddle being at last solved, threw herself down from a high rock and perished.

Œdipus afterwards became king of Thebes, but was overwhelmed by terrible sorrows. In his old age he was driven forth, and wandered, blind and helpless, in strange lands, dying at last at Athens, where his friend Theseus had welcomed him. His troubles, however, were lightened by the unceasing love and care of his lovely daughter Antigone.

The Sirens were the daughters of the river-god Acheloüs, and were companions of Proserpine at the time when she was carried off by Pluto. They were so

attached to her that when they had fruitlessly sought for her all over Sicily, they begged Jupiter to grant them wings, so that they might carry on their search over the sea. Their request was granted, and they were turned into birds, but so sweet were their voices (their mother being one of the Muses) that Jupiter would not suffer those to be destroyed, so they still retained the heads of maidens.

At a later time we find them very much changed in character, when they seem to be an embodiment of the hidden dangers which often beset an attractive coast. They are represented as beautiful maidens, with the terrible claws of a bird of prey, and sometimes with wings, who sit on the shore of a beautiful island somewhere near Sicily, luring mariners to their doom. They sing with such marvellous sweetness that none who hear them can resist the temptation to land, when they are devoured by the pitiless monsters. Around them lie the bones of their victims, but others are too enchanted to take warning by their fate.

Ulysses, on his long homeward journey, had to pass by their island, but he determined to hear their song without danger. So the crafty warrior filled the ears of his men with wax, so that they should not hear the enticing strains, and ordered them on no account to pay any attention to him until they were

far from the dangerous spot. Then he had himself bound firmly to the mast, and his men rowed past the island. When he heard the song of the Sirens, he made frantic signs to his men to loose him, but they obeyed his first command and went on with their rowing, so the danger was passed in safety. One of the monsters was so mortified at the escape of Ulysses that she cast herself into the sea and so perished.

The Argonauts also passed the isle of the Sirens, and had a very narrow escape. As they heard the enchanting strains, weariness came over them, they thought of all the toils they had undergone, and all that lay before them. Why should they not, they asked each other, cease from all their endless labour, and land on this inviting shore, to spend their lives in luxurious ease and the enjoyment of such wondrous music?

But, fortunately, Orpheus was with them, and when he saw them giving way to the charm, he seized his lyre, and sang in heroic strains the glory of striving and overcoming. More and more loudly he sang, till he drowned the seductive voices of the Sirens, and courage and hope came back into the hearts of his companions. So they bent to the oars, and Orpheus did not cease his inspiring song until the danger was left far behind.

In another of his famous adventures, Ulysses came

Orpheus

J. M. Swan, R.A.

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into conflict with the Cyclops, Polyphemus. He with his brother monsters lived in an island which they alone inhabited, living in caves, and tending their flocks of immense sheep. Coming to the island, Ulysses left most of his ships at anchor some distance away, but with his own vessel landed on the coast, and began to explore it, seeking food for his ships. His men carried a skin of wine as a present to any important personage they might meet.

Coming to a huge cave, they entered, and to their surprise found great stores of cheese, with bowls of milk, and in one part pens containing young lambs and kids. Everything was in order, but no man was visible. While they were examining the place, a huge giant came up, driving before him a large number of sheep and goats. Throwing down outside the cave a huge bundle of wood he was carrying to burn, he drove the animals inside to milk them, first rolling into the opening a stone so large that twenty oxen could not have moved it.

Having milked the ewes, he set aside part of the milk for drinking, and prepared the rest for making cheese. Then, as he turned round, he caught sight of the strangers, who would ere this have made their way out of the cavern if the door had not been so effectually shut. In his huge voice he asked who they were and how they came there, while his one

fierce eye, in the middle of his forehead, flashed with anger.

Ulysses humbly explained who they were, and begged hospitality in the name of the gods, but the monster scoffed at the gods, and seizing two of the sailors, killed them by dashing their heads against the rock. These he ate as his supper, washing down the horrible meal with bowls of milk. Then he lay down before the fire he had kindled on coming in, and fell asleep. Ulysses then drew his sword, and would have slain him, but suddenly remembered that it would be impossible to escape, with the huge rock blocking the entrance.

Next morning the giant awoke, killed and devoured two more of his prisoners, and drove away his flock, carefully blocking the opening of the cave, and on his return in the evening another two of the travellers shared the fate of their dead comrades. But meanwhile, Ulysses had thought out a plan of escape, and presently, bringing forward the wine they had fortunately carried with them, invited Polyphemus to taste it. The giant was delighted with this, to him, new beverage, and asked the name of the giver. Ulysses replied that his name was Noman, and the giant told him that as a mark of his esteem he would eat him last.

Polyphemus then drank so much of the wine that

he presently fell into a drunken sleep, and now was the time for which Ulysses waited. Taking a large piece of the giant's huge olive staff, he and his men held it in the fire till the end was one burning and glowing mass, and then plunged it into the eye of the sleeping monster, twisting it round and quite destroying the sight.

Then, while the howls of the cyclops rang through the cave, Ulysses and his companions rushed off and hid themselves in crevices. Drawn by the uproar, other giants gathered outside to know the cause. To their enquiry he answered: "Friends, I die, and Noman gives the blow." Thinking he meant that the pain was sent by the gods, they left him and went back to their own caves.

In the morning Polyphemus opened the mouth of the cave and let out his flock to feed, but stood in the entrance and felt the backs and sides of the sheep as they passed, to make sure his enemies were not escaping. However, Ulysses had expected this, and had made preparations for it. With twigs from the monster's bed they had fastened the sheep side by side in threes during the night, and under the middle one of each three a Greek was clinging, so they all got past unsuspected. Ulysses himself was under the largest ram of the flock.

Before they had gone far, they loosed themselves,

and drove as many as they could carry down to their ship, which they pushed off from shore as quickly as possible. When they thought they were at a safe distance, Ulysses shouted to the Cyclops, telling him it was to Ulysses he owed his shameful defeat. But this almost brought destruction upon him, for the Cyclops, heaving up a huge rock, threw it in the direction of the sound. Falling just in front of the prow, it drove the vessel back towards the land, but the next rock fell short, and the wave it raised carried the Greeks out of reach.

Dearly did Ulysses pay for this triumph, for the Ocean God, the father of Polyphemus, inflicted numberless misfortunes on him in return for the fate of his son, but after many years he got back safely to his own land.

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